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In search of the sublime

Denis Donoghue

RUSSELL FRASER

A Mingled Yarn: The Life of R. P. Blackmur
375pp, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
£11.95
015 1601380

"R. P. Blackmur was our best American critic, a good poet, and a great man", Russell Fraser claims on the first page of his biography, making three difficulties for himself before he is obliged to make any. I have no scruple in accepting that Blackmur was a good poet, the measuring adjective being justified by about twelve live poems from his three books. *From Jordan's Delight* (1937), *The Second World* (1943) and *The Good European* (1947). Professor Fraser's concept of criticism doesn't coincide with mine, apparently. The best work in American criticism seems to me Emerson's in one way, Henry James's in another, and T. S. Eliot's in a third. If he means that Blackmur was superior to any or all of these, I don't agree with him but our disagreement seems not worth pursuing. If he regards Blackmur as a better critic than Kenneth Burke, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, or Yvor Winters, confining the competition to a few friends and colleagues, the dispute is even less worth pursuing. It is enough that Blackmur was, at his best, a splendid critic. There is no point in awarding a first prize. As for his being a great man, I would have been inclined to agree with Fraser, if I had not read his book. The question I have to face now is: what is the relation between the qualities I warm to in Blackmur's writing and the vanity and pettiness which Fraser ascribes to him? Fraser says that Blackmur was a great man, but he has made it impossible for me to take the claim seriously.

If there is a common or received account of Blackmur's work in criticism, it runs somewhat like this. His early books, *The Double Agent* (1935), and *The Expense of Greatness* (1940), were remarkably acute studies in the language of modern poetry. His essays on Hart Crane, Emily Dickinson, E. E. Cummings, and other poets showed what the critical analysis of language could do. But gradually he let his vices defeat his merits. (The later work, in the years after 1950, is prolix,

self-indulgent, not so much difficult as vain: "shattered poetry", in Hugh Kenner's account. In some of his essays in *Language as Gesture* (1952), and in more of them in *The Lion and the Honeycomb* (1955), *Eleven Essays in the European Novel* (1964), and the posthumous *A Primer of Ignorance* (1967), Blackmur took himself too seriously, junketing around the world as sage for the Rockefeller Foundation, sounding off about the state and fate of nations.

More detailed versions of this account are given in Kenner's *Gnomon* and René Wellek's essay on Blackmur (*The Southern Review*, Summer 1971). Wellek makes much of Blackmur's penurious education, his ignorance of the several languages he liked to quote, his engaging in "deliberate obfuscation, verbal jugglery and even charlatanism". The essays on the European novel, Wellek dismisses as pretentious and ignorant. Kenner's essay fastens with notable irritation on Blackmur's language, his "doodling with other men's idioms in the hope that something critically significant will occur". His habitual procedure, Kenner says, is "to find out what he means by exploring the words in which he is trying to say it".

I am not sure that the procedure is as foolish as Kenner thinks. It is true that some of Blackmur's paragraphs make you light-headed. Wallace Stevens said that after reading ten or twelve pages of Blackmur, one comes away "longing for sex and politics". But Blackmur's vertigo is often a better experience than the sanity offered by lesser men. To read him at all you have to grant him a peculiar relation to words. He liked to quote a sentence from Elizabeth Sewall's book on Valéry, that "words are the mind's one defense against possession by thought or dreams; even Jacob kept trying to find out the name of the angel he wrestled with". Blackmur respected thought, but he didn't believe that thought is enough or that its official procedures are bound to succeed.

Fraser is informative on Blackmur's early years, son of unhappy parents, victim, too, of an aborted education. He read lavishly, but chose the books upon hunches and got into the habit of an opportunistic relation to whatever he read. He picked up a few notions from Croce, a few more from Santayana. A poor boy, he early

learned to affect the style of a partisan. No wonder he spent all his life trying to write a lordly meditation on Henry Adams: unfinished as it is, it is a thrilling book. At Princeton, the boy without a BA became a full Professor, directed the Gauss Seminar in Literary Criticism. He taught a famous course in Dante, Pascal, and

had been congealed into thought: that way, he could keep them alive at the risk of keeping them unmoved. He had no interest in sentences which pin down a meaning already, in effect, complete. A few years ago I heard Wellek saying, in a lecture, that Blackmur devised his style to lord it over the professors, or to bamboozle them. There is no evidence in Fraser's biography that Blackmur was impressed or intimidated by trained academic minds, or that he made a kind of euphuism to show off in their company. He showed off, playing the prince in Princeton, but for other reasons, proving to himself that he had survived, and that like a prince he could shine. Fraser's book documents the cure Blackmur took to keep up princely appearances. It is appalling to reflect upon such nonsense, and upon Blackmur's need of it.



R. P. Blackmur

Montaigne, wooing their texts as if a full sense of them could only be erotic. Eliot and James offered further incentives. Some readers say that Blackmur's Epicurean style, in the later essays, was the regrettable consequence of his taste for the later style of Henry James, but the case is weak. The styles are incommensurate.

My own view is that Blackmur was a sublimist, and that what he was always trying to take hold of was the experience of the Sublime. He was not the Aristotle or the Coleridge he sometimes thought himself but the Longinus: every essay he wrote is a little treatise on the sublime. So he wanted to deal with words before they

Fraser has interviewed everyone, apparently, who came within a mile of Blackmur, so his book is generous in the detail of gossip, lore, and reminiscence. But some questions remain obscure. Did Blackmur edge Tate out of Princeton or not? Or was Tate's performance so erratic that he had to go? Granted that Blackmur's marriage to Helen Dickson was wretched, how is it that she emerges, from Fraser's book, at least clear in her dreadful relation to Blackmur, while Blackmur's relation to her is still, despite the detail, fuzzy? Had she any interest in his work, or was it bleached out of existence for her because of Blackmur's domestic incapacity? Fraser is always busy on the page, bringing up one detail after another, but he is never quiet for long enough to adjudicate the evidence or show where it leads. He refers to Blackmur's talent for personalizing the proximate past and locating himself at the centre of it, a matter in which Fraser himself has a rare talent. He personalizes everything, as if he were giving a memorable performance for the benefit of the Princeton Alumni. Blackmur is called Richard throughout, and nearly everybody else is given to us in a colloquial form we have had no right to expect. A reader who can't aspire to become a member of the Princeton Club is likely to be irritated rather than delighted to be told about Monte Belgon, Matty Josephson, Billy Phelps, Lou Cox, Jack Wheelwright, Win Scott, Ted Spencer, Ged Bentley, and Borge

(E. B. O. Bergerhoff, to give him the only name by which I want to know him). Fraser is a lively writer, but it is a pity he interferes so much with his perceptions. It is well enough to be told that Blackmur's style "grew prolix", but I can't make much use of the further description, "and sickly shining like the paintings of Douanier Rousseau". There are problems enough with Blackmur without running off to consult the Douanier.

The trouble with Fraser's book is that everything in it is foreground: there is not enough background, or the peace and quiet in which it might be composed. There are lively scenes, like the performance of Dwight Macdonald at a Gauss Seminar. But Fraser needs to show what it meant to Blackmur that his mind was engrossed, as it was, with Dante, Pascal, Montaigne, Eliot, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, and James; or that he had intellectual as well as personal relations with Ransom and Burke. Fraser isn't helpful on these matters. Instead, he keeps up a nervous run of narrative, often defeated by his interventions and explanations. He reports that, sometime in the 1950s, two of Blackmur's students, Peter Putnam and Robert Fuller, sent their master a long analysis of his writing. In Fraser's account of the analysis, it is impossible to know where Putnam and Fuller leave off and Fraser takes up the story. Who owns these perceptions, for instance, Putnam and Fuller or Fraser alone?

Out of his deprivations he made "a

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music of the dry emptiness of the soul caught in reason. Making indifference dance, he carried reason to the side of God. Conscientious as ever, I turned to the notes at the back of the book and found this: "After Putnam and Fuller".

There are other places in the book where Fraser, running so fast, falls over himself.

Richard is the type of Alexandrian poet who has lost his way or found a better way. He answers to either description. Robert Lowell wrote later, in a poem "for Richard Blackmur":

His logic lacerates his vision, vision turns his logic to zealotry. Confusion, I am afraid. "Logic lacerates the vision and vision turns logic to zealotry" is what Blackmur wrote of Lowell, in a review of *Land of Unlikeness*, not what Lowell wrote of

Blackmur. In Lowell's poem "Playing Ball with the Critic" the sentence, slightly misquoted, is given in quotation marks, the allusion clear enough.

It is hard to know what precisely Blackmur was doing as a critic. His work moves between a set of terms, often two words in which he takes pleasure and finds incitement. Mostly, the first is chaos or a synonym of it, and the second is order: the first means what in life we have to have, else we die, the second how we act upon the first, the action being often not what is needed, too much or not enough. In a late essay from *The Lion and the Honeycomb*, the first is behaviour, and the second is morals, which is "what we think about in our quarrel with behaviour". The problem is how to give our richest "theoretic form" to behaviour. "A theoretic form is a way

of seeing: no more". Our great fear, Blackmur says, "is that our behaviour may overwhelm us; our great delight is when we have transformed our aspirations into behaviour; our fate is that we shall be mainly incarnations of our behaviour. *Macbeth* is our fear; *The Tempest* is our delight; *Antony and Cleopatra* our fate". Behaviour and morals, chaos and order, the actual and the real, momentum and the ideal in sight: these are the terms in which Blackmur finds the conditions of our lives. No "theoretic form" is complete. Apart from the many other considerations, "it is only the language we use which must abbreviate and truncate our full discourse". I take this as the explanation and at least the partial justification of whatever Blackmur did with language: he was trying to prevent his sentences from settling upon the abbreviations and

truncations he knew he couldn't prevent for ever. If you really believe, as Blackmur did, that the mind is inadequate to what it confronts, and that the languages we use are not much better, you are bound to conclude that failure is inevitable and that we can only postpone it. Criticism, for Blackmur, was a way of postponing failure: it was desperation, more often than self-indulgence, that drove his paragraphs into vertigo. "Doodling with other men's idioms" isn't an accurate description. Blackmur's recourse to other men's idioms, mostly Shakespeare's or Dante's or Eliot's, was his way of taking their visions seriously; that is, of using them. What Kenner calls doodling was Blackmur's way of staying within words so that, from within, he could drive them beyond their standard or official intention, lest they settle too genially

upon their abbreviations. Professor Fraser's help is needed: these questions, so I wish he had produced domestic detail. No biography of an interesting man is to be trusted, demeaned him. Near the end, when there was no room for vanity, Fraser's descriptions of Blackmur's last years is the best of the book. Kenneth Burke once couldn't walk across the room without getting out of a chair without being crippled with pain, his limbs groaning before he died. He died of a heart attack on February 2, 1960, at age of sixty-one.

image of fire breaking from within earth" in Hopkins. Was Hopkins here by that powerful image of those "certain divine rays", which Vaughan said, "break out of the clouds, adversity, like sparks out of an afflicted flint"? Indeed when Hopkins speaks of God in creation as "lancing like the blowpipe flame", he is not perhaps remembering what metaphysical poet and poet Crashaw, who speaks of the Incarnate God entering His creation "highly in lumbent flame"? The relation between spirit and matter, Miss Raine's dominant theme, is nowhere so persistently or so profoundly treated in the metaphysical poets. Oddly, it mentions them nowhere. I think, in this book, though her treatment of Hopkins, by its own lambency, comes nearest to undermining the position which in theory she holds.

Hopkins was much influenced by Heraclitus, and in his poem "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection" he relates fire to the resurrection. Kathleen Raine points to the "characteristic character", which "Yeats understood to be the element in Christianity which scandalised the Greeks". Something in Hopkins responded to the "thisness" of all that is specific and individual, in other words to all that is "nothing is so pregnant and straightforward to the truth", he had written in his notes on Parmenides, "as simple yes and is". Even his view of the afterlife was an expression of this: "Hopkins looked not for the immortality of the soul but for the resurrection of the body... The comfort of the resurrection lies in the promise that the 'it is', here so fleeting, will there be made eternal; not another world, but this world experienced after another manner."

that one had to admit that Blake - when all was said and done - was "dorty". The book stands or falls by the chapter on Hopkins, though Miss Raine's pieces about the work of two long-standing friends, David Jones and Cecil Collins, are also enjoyable. These last two pieces are both themselves specific and admiring of the specific: the chapter on David Jones is actually titled "David Jones and the Actual Love and Known". Thus it seems that when Miss Raine is herself faced with the actual, her philosophy changes. This essay closes with the words: "Incarnational" was perhaps for him the most significant word of all. What is 'capable of being loved and known' is God incarnate. This unlovely but, under the circumstances, interesting word becomes more important still in the essay on Hopkins. She recognizes in Hopkins "this physicality", this incarnational

A necessary consequence of Miss Raine's dualistic approach is that her judgments on poetry depend on the disembodied sentiments expressed, not on the particular words themselves. For magnanimous sentiments, Yeats, Shelley, and the prophetic Blake are hard to beat, and they are here mined for all they can yield. It was with some amazement that I read her verdicts on Wordsworth and Auden, two poets, however different, whose "meaning" cannot be fished out of their poems for discussion in this way. Apparently on the basis of his early political views, Miss Raine believes that, as a poet, Auden "looked for the steady conquest of the irrational", and consequently she rates his imaginative power well below that of Vernon Watkins. This is surely to confuse poetical sentiments with poetry. But Auden had already said himself beyond the pale mischievously remarking to Miss Raine, "at a party in New York",

Birds of a feather

Frank Tuohy

NICHOLAS DELBANCO

Group Portrait: Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, Ford Madox Ford, Henry James, and H. G. Wells. 224pp. Faber. £8.95. 0 571 11880 1

Nicholas Delbanco has planned his work to illustrate what he calls "collegiality" or "collegiality": a quality that the identifies as having existed among these writers when all of them were living close to each other in West Kent or East Sussex around the turn of the century.

Today, especially when one is resident at a university, it is easy to assume that writers enjoy each other's company, and to proceed to the conclusion that in doing so they will share useful ideas about technique as well as the ideas of writers' seminars, creative writing courses and workshops, has spread from the United States to this country. If the same thing happened in the past, it must have been

under the auspices of personal friendship. The popularity of books about the Bloomsbury group has strengthened this impression, though in their case friendship of the inner circle must have been helped by the fact that they were all doing different things and, to that extent at any rate, did not get in each other's light.

Delbanco quotes from Ada Gaiswirth's notebook to show the large number of writers whom her husband knew between 1905 and 1910. "That constant keeping up to the mark," he notes, "could not have failed to fire ambition." But there is no reason to conclude that they spoke of anything but cricket or politics. When invited by P. H. Newby, then in charge of the Third Programme, to contribute a conversation between himself and a friend on the subject of his writing, Evelyn Waugh replied: "I am afraid this is not practical as I never mention my writing to my friends." From the English point of view it may be that collegiality is strictly for colleges.

Except for Wells, however, the group in question were a cosmopolitan lot. Conrad and James were certainly aware of a world outside, where salons

and literary schools existed. But, as Delbanco points out, there was no leading lady and therefore no salon. James, in any case, had severe doubts about the gentility of the other members and their wives, and this was sufficient to keep them apart.

Because of the lack of other evidence, *Group Portrait* concentrates on three themes: the tenacity of Brede Manor by Stephen Crane and his sordid wife Cora, the former Madame of the Hotel de Dream; the collaboration of Conrad and Ford; and the correspondence between Henry James and H. G. Wells and their subsequent quarrel. There are other themes available - no one has yet studied the lifelong hostility between Wells and Ford, which culminated in the publication of Wells's novel *The Bulphur of Blup*. And where Henry James is concerned, there are endless complexities in all his relationships. But Delbanco's purpose is not literary research; he depends on secondary sources entirely - he even quotes Virginia Woolf as quoted by somebody else, and his citations will be familiar to anyone else with a cursory knowledge of the subject. Possibly he is aiming at

Claude Glass

To Robert and Pamela Woolf

Eyes are too close to Nature to be nice, So Claude's disciples thought of a device. Through which they could evade the messy world. By catching it in image as it curled. Within a glass held up before its face To give God's barbarous hills and rivers grace.

His name became an impulse to impart To Nature all the better things of Art. Taught British tourists for a century To turn their backs on what they went to see. Meanwhile the men of coal and iron and steel Took out of Nature what they knew was real.

Now from the Tyne's black stacks and blacker steam We drive out to the Lakes and their museum To seek what never was but always risked. The truth to be the fair, the picturesque. A landscape painter that the somnolent will recognize as vintage human art.

Anne Stevenson

BIOGRAPHY

The corruptions of rhetoric

Robert Skidelsky

NICHOLAS MOSLEY

Rules of the Game: Sir Oswald and Lady Cynthia Mosley 1896-1933. 274pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95. 0 436 28849 4

Oswald Mosley was the stuff of which tragic heroes are made. Robert Skidelsky wrote of him in 1925 that he had the "Divine Spark". His flaw was possible, that he could get away with anything. In 1921, soon after the start of his Parliamentary career, his wife Cynthia wrote to him: "My sweet... if you can't be good be careful". It was the kind of advice Oswald habitually ignored, until it was too late. In business life he might have made and lost several fortunes - and kept the last one. In political life, which allows brilliance, but not brilliant achievement, his gamble on fascism in 1932 was a gamble too many. He was compulsively retired into another game, the game of might-have-been, or the myth-making game. He and his opponents between them conspired to make him taboo - the embodiment of forces too dangerous to be useful in his public life. I wrote a book about him in 1975 in which I tried to reduce him to the more mundane proportions of history. But he still lives in that part of life made up of myths and legends; and will no doubt continue to do so.

To his eldest son, Nicholas, born in 1923, Oswald Mosley also appeared as a somewhat magical figure. In Nicholas's world parents and children had very little routine contact - separated by nannies and governesses and the spaces of large country houses. Adults appeared to him as performers, constantly play-acting. Oswald would clamber down the chimney dressed as Father Christmas, or intone nonsense rhymes with a far-away look in his eye. Nicholas's parents and their friends, devotees of the fun-life, as it was known, would get up to absurd pranks, fall around, dress up in odd clothes, make weird noises. Every so often they would all rush off to the South of France. Nicholas concluded that the grown-up world was completely mad, but that the madness might have some meaning at a level beyond his understanding.

As he grew older the childish image of his father confronted the political legend, and the two got confused in his mind. Oswald Mosley now presented himself to Nicholas in the guise of Superman, the supremely rational being, baffled by the forces of inertia and wickedness in his attempts to save the world from another war, and build a land fit for heroes. In the Second World War Nicholas fought with the Rifle Brigade in Italy and spent his leaves visiting his father at Holloway prison. They discussed Goethe and Nietzsche and the Greek tragedians. "Darling Nick," Oswald wrote to him in 1943, "I can never tell you what a joy it was to know you as an adult and to find what a perfect community of mind and spirit we had in searching together through all the higher and lovelier things of life." But something seemed to Nicholas to be not quite right. What had these "higher and lovelier things" to do with marching around in black shirts, saluting, street-brawls and attacking Jews in the East End of London? He started asking questions. Oswald explained patiently. He was in the revolutionary business: one could not make an omelette without breaking eggs. He had a complete answer to every objection. Time and again Nicholas retired baffled, but with the growing conviction that his father was the master of one thing only - the manipulation of words and arguments to shed the best possible light on practical reality. From the age of seven Nicholas had started stammering. He now developed a theory about it: stammering on some level "is simply a protest against a too easy flow of words; against one's own and other people's terrible tendency to bury living things under a verbal lava-flow."

Defeated in verbal exchanges with his father, Nicholas equipped himself with the last argument. He studied psychology and philosophy. He took to

writing novels and biographies about the games people play in their private and public lives, about their use of words to obscure the truth. But the game he wanted to understand above all was the game his father played - the marriage game he had played with his wife Cynthia, Lord Curzon's daughter, who had died when Nicholas was nine, and the political game. Oswald Mosley died on December 3, 1980. Ten days before that, when Nicholas told him he hoped to write a book about him, Oswald said he could have his papers. "It was as if," Nicholas writes, "he knew as part of him had always known that if anything was to survive of what he had cared about it would be to do with efforts at truth."

Less than two years later Nicholas Mosley's "efforts at truth" have yielded a merciless exposure of his father's verbal pretensions. The first of two volumes takes the story up to 1932-3, by which time Oswald, who was still only thirty-six, had run through his first marriage and most of the eligible society women of London, and through all the political parties. It is a story above all about the corrupting effect of a way with words. His father is presented as someone who manipulated words to transfer the contradictions and paradoxes of his married and political life from a sphere where they should influence (and restrain) action to a sphere where they need not - where they can be reconciled by proclaiming that they have been. It is the story of how a marriage and a political career were ruined by an inexhaustible capacity for rationalization. It is about the use of the arts of seduction to enslave women and audiences. What Nicholas Mosley does is to provide a running commentary on his father's prose - his intimate words to his wife, his political speeches and writings - which has the effect of a needle pricking a balloon. For example, in his autobiography Oswald explained his participation in London's social life as necessary for "Ganzheit" or wholeness. Nicholas comments, "What these *salons* were useful for, of course, was the business of men picking up women." This is the essence of the illusion-stipping exercise. Nicholas writes about his relationship with Oswald: "From my side at least there was loyalty and some hostility, anger and bewilderment, nearly always love." But the memory of the verbal humiliations which Oswald inflicted on him is too great, one suspects, for much loyalty and love to come through; or any undue consideration for the feelings of his father's widow, Diana.

Whatever Nicholas Mosley's motives in writing the book, it is the results which concern us. And there is no doubt that he has achieved something dazzling - a book which is immensely clever and interesting on many different levels. There is a brilliant chapter called "The Riddle of the Sphinx" in which he tries to sum up his view of his father - which is basically that of a hero ruined by lack of self-knowledge; able to pierce through other people's deceptions but blind to his own. Also interesting is Nicholas Mosley's controlling theme that individuals must work out their destinies within the "rules of the game" if they are to save themselves and others from destruction. His book also works very well in human terms. The pace is fast, the characters are vivid, his mother's death unbearably sad. Much of this effect is created by his skill as a novelist; but Oswald and Cynthia Mosley live up to the demands of art.

The doubts about his efforts at truth arise at a different, and more banal, level - the level of facts. Nicholas Mosley tries to confront his father's fantasies with reality. But his own notion of reality is itself a highly abstract one. He seeks to illuminate truth by myth and metaphor. The trouble is one can play precisely the same game with his own ideas about reality as he plays with his father's. It is to say that they do not represent the facts of life in their obvious, common-sense meaning. Mr. Mosley finds it very difficult to get out of the legendary game which his father set up for talking about his career. Like Oswald he is full of very interesting but not very useful ideas. What he is full of is a very interesting but not very useful idea: what relation has it to what actually happened?

Take, for example, his account of his father's marriage to his mother. He presents Oswald (or Tom as he was known) as a kind of sexual monster, who enslaved Cynthia with baby talk, while he went off and had affairs. He sees the marriage as exemplifying Oswald's destructive use of words - in this case, they destroyed his mother. She could not win her arguments with him, she could not resist his naughty boy letters to his "darling soft nosed wog-tail" protesting his undying love for her, she could not stop adoring him - yet she felt a falseness; if he really loved her, he would not carry on in the way he did. In the end, Nicholas Mosley writes, "she felt death as a condition in which human beings might at last be all-of-a-piece". And her own death, from peritonitis, at the age of thirty-four, seems to give artistic and moral point to the story. Yet this is not the point. The destructiveness lay in the situation, not in Oswald's manipulation of it to keep the marriage going. They were two incompatible people held together by love, and for whom separation would have been more painful than the pain they caused each other. Mr Mosley feels that his father tried to deal with his mother as an adult she might have grown up to understand and accept the complexities of their situation - the "rules of the game" as the upper classes played it, which allowed affairs on both sides. But I doubt if this is true. Cynthia does not seem to have been that kind of person. The destructiveness of Oswald's marriage to Cynthia was followed by forty-four years of unclouded happiness with his second wife, Diana. Whatever the moral of the tale it does not seem to be the moral which Nicholas Mosley wishes to draw.

Another major misunderstanding arises about the relationship of his father's economic ideas to the political game. As Nicholas Mosley sees it, politicians trade ideals for office, because they recognize that to be fully serious about realizing ideals would require dictatorship. That is why they talk a lot about making things better, but do not do so much about it. This seems to me fair. But he then uses this framework to explain the politicians' rejection of his father's plans to cure unemployment, which seems to me to be simply wrong. He writes:

Of course unemployment could be solved: a leader could say - You will be employed in this way or that way or you will be shot. Most people did not think of this solution because it did not seem relevant; it might work, but they assumed it would be worse than the curse. But they did not quite say this, because it would seem that they were not interested in solving unemployment which they were. And so they said nothing. And they were devoted. And the city starved. The riddle was not solved not because it was too difficult but because it was too undeniably easy. But what was also unpalatable was the fact that in that case perhaps the only solution was that there was no solution - one had to learn to live with the curse.

This is interesting and well-put, but what on earth has it got to do with his father's unemployment policies? The main points of view, partly derived from Keynes, have since become routine in systems which undoubtedly remain liberal and democratic? (Only in recent years have they started to be challenged.) Nicholas Mosley sees his father's plan in 1925 for an Economic Council to "estimate the difference between the actual and the potential production of the country" as a call to dictatorship. This task has long since been performed, on the Treasury computer. The truth is - and we are dealing with efforts at truth - that there was nothing in Oswald Mosley's economic plans which were incompatible with the rules of the game as they were then understood. If just as they were then understood, in Nicholas Mosley's eyes the rules of the political game were needed as defences against the "dark forces" in his father's character; and this is true. But they were not needed in defence against his father's policies. The confusion arises, I think, partly because Mr Mosley is not really at home with the economic argument,



Interesting subjects: John Strachey, Fenner Brockway and Oswald (Tom) Mosley, at the Independent Labour Party Summer School held at Lady Warwick's house Easton Lodge, in 1926; reproduced from the book reviewed on this page.

and partly because he tends to see his father's policies as rationalizations of his drives and obsessions. In this he does him an injustice. This is a shame. For an appreciation of his father's desire and capacity for constructive statesmanship, as well as an exploration of its sources, would have balanced Mr Mosley's picture of a mainly self-justifying rhetorician. In the many excellent photographs of Oswald Mosley in this book, the only one in which he does not seem to be performing is when he is shown with John Strachey and Fenner Brockway at an Independent Labour Party Summer School, obviously talking about something which interested him. This side of him is rarely allowed to emerge.

Oswald Mosley's break with the political game in 1931-32 had less to do with the disappointment of the rational man who sees his plans rejected at some level he cannot understand than with the recklessness of a rich young politician who senses that his world - and the game - are collapsing and decides to "have a go" and see what he can rescue from the wreck. The torments of rationalization which Nicholas got from his father came later - after the gamble had failed, and the legend-building had begun. For the years covered in this book, one is left with the odd feeling that Mr Mosley has constructed a fascinating apparatus of thought to understand things which were not happening.

Nicholas Mosley

RULES OF THE GAME

Sir Oswald and Lady Cynthia Mosley 1896-1933

"The details are all here, unflinchingly and sometimes brilliantly presented, fixing Mosley once and for all."

David Pryce-Jones, *Listener*

"Nicholas Mosley's fascinatingly revealing profile of his parents, their politics and... marriage. Riveting reading."

Graham Lord, *Sunday Express*

"The author's own evocations of childhood, glimpses of his parents in the strange world of grown-ups, are beautifully well done."

Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Times*

"It is both sympathetic and fascinating."

Martin Gilbert, *Mail on Sunday*

£8.95

Guy Bellamy

THE SINNER'S CONGREGATION

"Guy Bellamy's amusing jape about a small country hotel is a joy... Zany, with snappy dialogue and nice throw-away lines, the story carries a genuine sense of lonely tragedy beneath the chuckles."

Graham Lord, *Sunday Express*

"Could novelists as riotous and eccentric as Guy Bellamy don't grow on trees, nor do they always grow so engagingly on readers."

David Hughes, *Mail on Sunday*

"I laughed and finally I shuddered... a powerful novel."

Peter Grosvenor, *Daily Express*

£8.95

Secker & Warburg

Writing to hounds

T. J. Binyon

JOHN WELCOME

The Sporting World of R. S. Surtees
203pp. Oxford University Press.
£9.95
0 19 21766 1

Thackeray said that he would have given all he had to have written Mr. R. S. Surtees' *Hounds*; Kipling admired Surtees prodigiously, making Stalky quote his words in almost every sentence; Orwell thought highly of him, as did Sassoon; and Virginia Woolf wrote of his novels that "They have had their effect upon the language. This riding and tumbling, this being blown upon and rained upon and splashed from head to heels with mud, have worked themselves into the very texture of English prose." Yet, for all that, R. S. Surtees has never become widely known as an author outside the narrow circle of those who, like Mr. Jorrocks, think hunting to be "the sport of kings, the image of war without its guilt, and only five-and-twenty percent of its danger." It is high time for him to be seen, not just as a sporting author, but as a writer who deserves a place beside his better contemporaries.

Robert Smith Surtees was born in 1805, the second son of a Durham landowner. He went to Durham Grammar School, was articled to a solicitor in Newcastle at seventeen, moved to another firm in London at twenty and three years later set up his own place in Lincoln's Inn Fields. In 1829 he spent some time in Boulogne, becoming joint master of a very nondescript pack with a former colonel in the Life Guards who had made England too hot to hold him - and who, thirty years later, was to be hideously traduced as John O'Dickey, the clubbable gambler of *Plain or Ringlet*, who fleeces Jasper Clockwork to the tune of £4000.

On his return to London Surtees began to contribute articles on hunting to the *Sporting Magazine*. In 1831 he published his first book, *The Horseman's Manual; being a treatise on Soundness, the Law of Warranty, and generally on the laws relating to Horses*. In the same year he left the *Sporting Magazine* and set up, as its direct rival, the *New Sporting Magazine*. At this time, his financial circumstances changed radically: his elder brother died of smallpox in Malta and Surtees became the heir to the family estate.

In 1836 he was invited to stand as the Conservative candidate for Gateshead, but withdrew before the poll; two years later his father died, Surtees moved north, took over the running of the estate and the family mining interests and set up a pack of hounds - "Talk of an MP's sh' MP compared to an MP?" as Mr. Jorrocks rhetorically inquires from the balcony of the Dragon Hotel in Handley Cross. The venture came to a sad end, however, a year or so later.

Jorrocks's Jaunts and Jollities, a collection of sketches from the *New Sporting Magazine*, was published in 1838 and proved a complete failure.

Testing times

Timothy D'Arch Smith

KAY ILLINGWORTH and KENNETH GREGORY

The Ashes: A Century
272pp. Collins, £7.95
0 00 210542 2

Rather shorter than the average one-day book of the 1920s and 30s, Kay Illingworth and Kenneth Gregory's compilation hurries us through one hundred years of cricket matches between England and Australia in under three hundred pages. These battles, fought for an urn of miscellaneous proportions supposedly filled with the ashes of a stump on ball cremated in memory of English cricketers killed in the war, are presented in a way that possibly, owing to the

Surtees married in 1841; in 1843 he brought out *Handley Cross*, an equal failure. It was followed in 1845 by *Handley Hall* - a dismal failure, and in 1847 by *Hawthorn Grange* - an utter failure.

Mr. *Sponge's Sporting Tour*, 1853, was the first of Surtees's novels to be illustrated by John Leech ("the illustrious Leech", as Surtees calls him in a preface) and was, possibly as a result, the first to enjoy any success. John Welcome repeats, but puts no trust in, the view that Lord Scampersdale in the novel is a caricature of the Earl of Wemyss, who was said to have once sworn at Surtees out hunting. Whatever the truth, it seems unlikely that the real peer would have been so poetical in his oaths as the fictional, who begins an address to Mr. *Sponge*: "Oh, you unsightly sanctified, idolatrous, Bagnigge-Wells coppermith, you think because I'm a lord and can't swear or use coarse language that you may do what you like"; while another concludes: "Rot ye, sir! hangin' too good for ye! you should be condemned to hunt in Berwickshire the rest of your life."

Leech also illustrated the second edition of *Handley Cross*, 1854, *Ask Mamma*, 1858, *Plain or Ringlet*, 1860, and Mr. *Facey Romford's Hounds*, 1864. This last, however, was a posthumous publication for both author and illustrator, Surtees dying in March and Leech in October of that year.

Welcome takes us through Surtees's life at a brisk but informative canter. He is particularly - almost perhaps unduly - fascinated by the peculiar relationship between Surtees and another sporting journalist of the time, Nimrod (pseudonym of Charles James Apperley), best known now for his life of John Mytton. Some twenty-five years older than Surtees, Nimrod was his predecessor on the *Sporting Magazine*, and later contributed to the *New Sporting Magazine*. Though Surtees portrayed him with some affection in the final chapter of *Jorrocks's Jaunts and Jollities*, he went on to caricature him mercilessly as the sporting journalist Pomponius Ego in *Handley Cross* - a duel between the two was only averted by Nimrod's death - and later wrote a long critical and biographical study of Nimrod, which is, in Mr. Welcome's words, "a vicious and spiteful *malice* of denigration." Instigation and derogation of Nimrod's abilities both as a horseman and a writer, Surtees's morbid envy seems to have been caused by Nimrod's brilliant success, both socially and as a journalist, compared to his own relative failure in these fields. As sportsmen, too, they were opposites: Surtees was a bruising rider to hounds whose attitude to hunting is expressed by the remark that "a man with five hunters and a hack makes a very respectable appearance in the provinces, but he has no business in Leicestershire". In contrast, the best that a friend can find to say of Surtees is that he is "a good but careful horseman"; he naturally hates Meltonian snobbery and is always ready to take a swing at the "customers", the crack riders of the "cut 'em down and hang 'em up to dry" counties.

household, containing only hurried substitute sweepings from a drawing-room grate, have nevertheless assumed from time to time titanic proportions. Their story is always worth telling, even in the rather staccato and sometimes obscure style the authors have adopted for this book. They have, though, drawn a nice line between character sketches and statistics but there are mistakes in some of the figures they give. For, Barrow made 0 and not 9 at the Oval in 1882; Lockwood took 11-76 and not 11-70 at Old Trafford in 1902; Miller made 58 not 54 at Headingley in 1948.

Illingworth, a much maligned but excellent cricketer, contributed a chapter on his 1970-1 tour when, with the Snows and Woodcut injured, he regained the Ashes in Australia. His critics will remember that this had not and

Surtees's novels provide a rich seam for the social historian or the compiler of supplements to the *OED*. He describes clothes, food and drink in immense detail, copies out a coachmaker's bill in full, and is horrified that a West End tailor should charge £5.18.6d for a "superfine black cloth coat", an article which his own tailor (Mr. Webster, of Air Street) supplies for £3.15s. Though the *OED* recognizes *siphonia* ("a light kind of overcoat") it ignores the *pocket-siphonia*, advertised by "the persevering Mr. Edmiston", which in *Plain or Ringlet* Mr. Bunting spreads beneath Rosa McDermott's feet. It remains silent, too, on the subject of *punny* (Mr. *Sponge's* hat was "not one of those punty awls or Cheshire-cheese flats") and *quaker-collared*. And it is a picture of the rural life of the period, a subject avoided or skirted by his contemporaries.

Mr. Welcome is for the most part sensible and interesting in his analysis of the novels. At one point, however, he chides Surtees for describing clothes "in almost wearisome detail, down to the last button and spur-strap" and elsewhere regrets that the author never imposed "essential form and coherence" upon *Handley Cross*. But it could be argued that it is precisely this meticulous eye for detail, combined with a rambling, inconsequential narrative, which makes *Handley Cross*, together with *Sponge and Facey Romford*, the minor masterpieces they undoubtedly are. Though there are superficial resemblances between Surtees and a number of contemporaries - Dickens, Thackeray, Disraeli, Trollope - in all essential respects he differs completely from them; among other writers he is closest, perhaps, to Gogol.

His characters are impelled either by greed ("Few people are magnanimous enough to resist cheating a young man in his Billy"), Mrs. Pringle writes to her son Billy), or conceit ("No young man would not rather have a blemish on his morality than on his 'ossmanship'", remarks Mr. Jorrocks) or by a combination of both. After the appearance of *Ask Mamma* a close friend urged Surtees to "give us a good character, man or woman; honest, truthful, domestic, trying to do what duty requires to God and man and happy, accordingly". Wiser than Gogol, Surtees ignored the advice.

Apart from the occasional descriptive passage he writes very conversationally, with a devil-may-care attitude towards conventional syntactical usage, and considerable use of slang and neologisms. One character is described as growing "more and more out-of-doorish, horsey and Hornsey Wood-ish", while another has "a good armfulful sort of figure". He belongs to that class of writers who take a delight in lists, enumerating articles of clothing and courses at dinner, or describing Sir Harry Scatterash's abandoned breakfast table: "The litter of eggs and remnants of toast, and broken bread and empty tin can racks, and cups and saucers, and half-emptied glasses, and wholly emptied champagne bottles, were scattered up and down a disorderly

table, further littered with newspapers, letter backs, county court summonses, mustard pots, anchovies, pickles." Minor, wholly irrelevant characters, mentioned perhaps once in the entire narrative, leap out of a book by virtue of a description which crams a three-deck novel into a single sentence: in *Hawthorn Grange* the late master of the Stout-as-steel hounds dies from "drinking a glass of oxalic acid in mistake for gin, being at the time rather overcome by brandy".

One passage from the climax of *Mr. *Sponge's Sporting Tour**, which Mr. Welcome quotes, could be taken as quintessentially Surteesian. Mr. *Sponge* and "the beautiful and tolerably virtuous Miss Gilters, of

Astley's Royal Amphitheatre", who hunt with Sir Harry Scatterash, hounds, are the only two riders to the kill. *Sponge* presents Lucy with a brush:

The fair lady leant towards him, as he adjusted it becomingly to her hat, looking at her best-dressed her lovely face, and feeling the pressure shot through Mr. *Sponge's* pullover, pull-baker coat, his country waistcoat, his Eureka shirt, Angora vest, and penetrated the very folds of his heart. He gave her a series of smacking kisses as she stood, her horse and astonished a possessor who happened to be hid in the adjoining hedge.

Summer

The summer mice are fat as butter.
There is the waste of a silver bronze-smithy,
Tightly-curved lathings, and the everlasting

Scent of flies.
There is a fly listening to an egg in the kitchen.
There is a child sipping warm blood in the womb,

In the hot ball-fat womb.
Auntie holds up the smoothing-iron
Polished like a mirror with its work,

She looks into it and spits,
It satisfies, she peels
The knife-edged denim off the ironing board;

It satisfies, his tomorrow's shirt,
Blue as the sky faded with its clouds;
And as the river goes to bed in leaves,

In ten billion leaves flowing through the summer,
So must the nephew sink into the feather-bed upstairs,
Wallow as if in a laundered lavender marsh.

The nephew sunk in the feather-bed upstairs,
Nesting for summer in this feather-bed,
Dreams of the women of the house that all night

They braid their hair and chat
And sweep the kitchen for tomorrow's chores
And they never go to bed at all,

Since they are still there in the morning frying breakfast,
Munching his fried bread with shining lips,
His smile pocked and sintered like cuttlebone,

The uncle rubs his big hands in the boy's hair.

Past the river jammed like corduroy with logs
Which have been there so long their shoots
Are bushing into hedgerows, locking them,

There is a bluebell-wind by mudflats
And within it a comb of soft long meadow that delves
Into a flank of Shivering Mountain;

The shuddering cloud-shapes shake over it,
The small springs shiver down its slopes,
The scree-slips day and night a little,

Expanding in the hot sun and holding,
Shipping a little further in oily dew of evening.

The shades that pour down Shivering Mountain
Are irresistible to me,
Its grey locks, cloud canopy,

Its cap of invisibility,
I climb into insubstantiality
Like an old Chinese effacing among his chasms

Sliding through empty ghost-rock-cities
Repopulated suddenly with shades.
I am not an old Chinese for long;

My uncle comes with dogs and shot-guns looking for me
And steps me back into his world.
And cuffs me down slippery scree, with his grinning eyes.

With a pock-mark like the bottom of the sea.

Peter Redgrove

RICHARD SHANNON

Gladstone: Volume One 1809-1865
480pp. Hamish Hamilton, £18.
0 241 0780 6
(To be published on November 8)

H. C. G. MATTHEW (Editor)
The Gladstone Diaries: With Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence.
Volume 7, January 1869-June 1871.
640pp. 0 19 822638 1
Volume 8, July 1871-December 1874.
616pp. 0 19 822639 X
Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35 each.

"What object Mr. Gladstone may be consciously pursuing we do not, of course, venture to decide", Lord Robert Cecil (ultimately 3rd Marquess of Salisbury) wrote stiffly in an 1861 number of the *Quarterly Review*. "No psychologist that ever existed could solve such a problem." Neither Cecil nor the psychologists of his day, a more reticent breed than their post-Freudian successors, had the advantage of access to what Gladstone himself called the "very secret and very arid Journal which I kept for about 70 years". From its forty-one volumes, crammed with revelations and self-deprecations, an infinite number of conclusions can be drawn about Gladstone's conscious pursuits, no less than his subconscious ones.

The history of those diaries, reviewed by M. R. D. Foot in his superb introduction to the first published volume, makes a story almost as fascinating and instructive as the diaries themselves. Soon after Gladstone died in 1898, John Morley was invited to write an official life. He was certainly not the family's first choice, and reportedly not the second either. For, despite his political proximity to the Grand Old Man, Morley suffered from certain limitations of sympathy, competence, and perspective. Sir William Harcourt, who shared his estrangement from front-bench Liberalism at the time, jealously congratulated him on the commission: "There's no man better qualified than you except, of course, on the religious question - you mustn't touch that; on the financial policy - you don't understand finance; or Home Rule - you've got a bee in your bonnet about that."

Gladstone's son, realizing as much, directed Morley to steer clear of spiritual concerns, with the result that Morley produced a three-tiered monument that emphasized - and thereby aimed to propagate - its subject's secular virtues. His "primarily political book on Gladstone", according to Foot, "was in fact doomed to portray him incompletely, simply because it was primarily political". Morley was not barred from the diaries, which were then among the accumulated mass of Gladstone's literary remains at Hawarden, but he consulted them selectively and haphazardly. His use of these "most intimate materials", Richard Shannon has asserted, was "fleeing, embarrassed, often tendentious, and in general gingerly insipid".

In 1928, a quarter of a century after Morley had completed his task, the diaries were separated from the Gladstone archive and locked away in the vaults of Lambeth Palace. Both archivists affiliated at the time. There the diaries sat until the mid-1950s, when the Clarendon Press bravely undertook to publish a multi-volume edition of the whole. In the interim, J. L. Hammond consulted a typeset version, which obliquely informed his *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*, a study that transcends the restrictions of its title, and his *Gladstone and Liberalism* (completed by Foot), a study that transcends the restrictions of its modest proportions. Without comparable benefit, Philip Magnus constructed a popular biography, which professional academics have found fashionable to scorn. More recently, E. J. Feuchtwanger and Peter Stansky have written useful books, each indebted to those early portions of the diaries which had already seen print.

At Stansky has remarked, "no final biography - if there can ever be such a creature - can appear until Colin Matthew finishes his exemplary editing of the Gladstone diaries", begun by Foot. The two halves of this observation are equally valid. While the contents of the diaries will doubtless influence further interpretations, they will surely not preclude controversy so much as foment it. Still, there exists the natural temptation for scholars in the field to wait and see. From all indications, their patience will not be tried too much longer. Since 1968, when the first instalment was presented, six further volumes (including the present pair) have appeared at irregular intervals. Gladstone's jottings, punctuated by his innermost thoughts, are now available up to 1874.

In the wake of this mighty project and - to no slight degree - in its light, Professor Shannon offers the first part of a "comprehensive new reading", which spans the years from 1809 to 1865. Harcourt may rest easy. Although, apart from a few tantalizing anticipations, Shannon has reserved the Irish question for subsequent examination, he displays a mastery command of fiscal complexities and a suitable preoccupation with Church doctrines and preferences.

With or without the diaries, Gladstone remains a formidable challenge. How is he to be rendered intelligible to an age that is casually indifferent, if not pugnaciously antagonistic, to many of the values he exemplified? Stephen Spender, in his 1937 journey *Forward from Liberalism*, considered him "a great figure, not to be jibed at, but worthy to be portrayed by a Cervantes". Shannon, interestingly enough, regards Gladstone as "something of a Don Quixote" at least during the period of the 1859 Parliament. That, however, is as far as he goes to meet Spender's specification.

"Every historian", suggested A. J. P. Taylor, "should write one biography, if only to learn how different it is from writing history." Previously, I must confess, I had recoiled from Taylor's prescription, which implied that these two complementary crafts were, to the contrary, mutually pre-emptive. Shannon's book demonstrates the thrust, if not necessarily the logic, of Taylor's dictum. It succeeds brilliantly as an exercise in history, combining a notable breadth with acute judgments. Yet it achieves only a qualified success as biography. The main problem, paradoxically, is that the diaries keep getting in the way, blurring the contours of the subject, overwhelming the reader with incidental reflections and details, and reducing the figure in the foreground to a fixture in the background.

That is not to say that Shannon fails to make excellent use of his indispensable source, merely that he tends to stand too much in awe of the sheer grandeur of its patiently majestic unfolding through seven of the most crowded and consequential decades that any man ever lived". Furthermore, the diaries have seemingly infected his prose style, which surges into redolently Victorian cadences. Quick to recognize "Gladstone's high standards of verbal reticulation and mastery of the art of subordinate clauses", Shannon replicates them:

At last, in 1833, John Gladstone, now a patriarchal seventy, was able to abandon his nomadic existence and install himself as Mr. Gladstone and Home at his austere imposing new country seat at Fasque, made available by the happy chance that Sir Alexander Ramsay bankrupted himself in building it to the designs of (probably) John Paterson of Edinburgh the most distinguished of the school of Robert Adam.

That parenthetical "probably", if nothing else, is the straw that breaks the camel's back or, less proverbially, the sentence's.

Quaint constructions abound: Gladstone does not campaign among the voters at Newark, but instead "ventures" to offer himself to their suffrage; he has "recourse to the prophylactic office of accosting prostitutes"; and, in reply to Russell,

Keeping the loins girded

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Quaint constructions abound: Gladstone does not campaign among the voters at Newark, but instead "ventures" to offer himself to their suffrage; he has "recourse to the prophylactic office of accosting prostitutes"; and, in reply to Russell,

he "animadverted indignantly". Peel once complained that he had "great difficulty sometimes in exactly comprehending what Gladstone means". And Shannon often does not help matters by his own convolutions and rhetorical devices, many of them curiously anachronistic. Again, the diaries appear to be his inspiration. Echoing Gladstone, Shannon speaks repeatedly of "modes" of policy or behaviour, and indulges in meteorological metaphors: "Other shapes were discernibly moving portentously in the January mists"; "Nor was the Oxford sky very clear"; "Enlarging horizons and shifting skies were as alarming and unsettling as ever"; and (three pages later) Gladstone "contemplated the immensity of shifting skies and enlarging horizons". This mingling of genuine and counterfeit Victorianisms has a disconcerting effect.

Clearly a difficult book to research and to write, it is also a difficult one to unravel, though the effort is handsomely repaid. Not least among its merits, it shows that Gladstone's was an exceptionally difficult life to live in "the age of examinations", as he both called and personified it; he constantly tested his own worthiness and, according to the super-human standards he set for himself, invariably found it deficient. His industry was prodigious. Sir James Graham, his colleague in Peel's administration, marvelled how "Gladstone could do in four hours what it took any other man sixteen to do, and he worked sixteen hours a day". Shannon invokes the diaries, where Gladstone admitted to the frivolity of taking time off from treasury duties to take a "walk", to illustrate the "rigidly systematic self-control" that made "Gladstone's private life... a triumph of machine over confusion". He is particularly skilful in capturing the flavour of Gladstone's marriage of "rare excellence" to Catherine Glynne, his "hero-woman".

"It is sometimes said", acknowledged Gladstone, "that I am too apt to draw distinctions." Readers of this biography will not be disabused of that view. Shannon investigates them all, whether in areas of theology, taxation, family relationships, private morals, party loyalty, foreign affairs, or franchise qualifications, and he discerns the consistency of an underlying inconsistency. "The cast of mind of a man who depended ultimately on the 'details of Revealed truth' as the foundation of his political principles was not likely to be a conventional or narrowly consistently party-political man", Shannon reminds us. Consequently, we cannot expect a conventional or consistently party-political approach from Gladstone on such issues as the Irish Question, the "solemn and awful church" of American slavery, the fate of subject nationalities, or the advance of democracy.

There are times when Shannon waxes impatient with the studied equivocations of his subject, who was capable of "excessively high-minded sanctimoniousness" to the point of absolute "humbug". At Oxford, Gladstone had irritated the examiners for the Ireland scholarship by evading the question "Who wrote 'God Save the King'?" with the disingenuous response that "Thompson wrote 'Rule Britannia'". It is only to be expected that he would later be all too capable of "deploying a schoolmaster's casuistry to avoid the logic of his own deepest avowals", until he eventually gained a reputation for being able to convince himself of the utter righteousness of whatever opinion he was urging at any given time. The application of this technique required "an outside object who functioned as a means of transferring guilt", and Disraeli conveniently served that purpose "as a demagogically evil element" in the structure (that Gladstone built for himself). Shannon's contention, virtually explicit, is that if Disraeli had not existed, Gladstone would have been obliged to invent him.

The tone throughout this inquiry is cool, but nevertheless, Shannon strips away the legends of Liberal hagiography by giving rein to a healthy scepticism. Gladstone's threats to

resign his seat as well as his office in 1845 were made too "naïvely" to be taken at face value. His residual Peelism was more strategic than programmatic. His enthusiasm for the Italian cause derived from and was "stimulated by anti-Popery"; far from being the galvanizing force that Magnus and others made out, it may even have retarded his gravitation in the direction of Liberalism. That Gladstone was "the keeper of the Victorian financial conscience" turns out to be yet another "myth". He shirked the principle of parliamentary sovereignty after the Indian mutiny, betrayed a "foolishly extravagant Russophilism" during the Crimean war, and ardently embraced Jefferson Davis and the cause of Southern secessionism. His recommendations for the Ionian Islands were compounded of "Homeric fancies", and he was admittedly surprised by the final settlement. He was usually an apologist for the Unspeakable Turk, and bore a measure of responsibility for the infamous Contagious Diseases Act. More to his credit, though less to his renown, he took a humanitarianism interest in the plight of the Romanians.

Without ignoring the bouts of self-deception or the acts of vindictiveness (especially those directed against Palmerston, whose singular offence apart from his longevity - was that he "treated God as a benign but remote foreign Great Power"), Shannon manages to portray a personality whose laudable earnestness and abiding sense of devotion were wholly compatible with the evolving tenets of an enveloping Conservatism. In fact, Liberalism was neither the only dynamic creed nor a predictable destination.

Reconciled to the "preponderating probability" that filled the "darkest prognostications" of John Wilson Croker, whom he met in 1835, Gladstone vowed to resist that decisive depressing preponderance, whirlpools of South Lancashire

which hinders us from girding up the loins". Compelled to jettison his "ideal of a sanctified state", so vital to his early development, he struggled to keep his own loins girded. For as long as possible, and possibly for longer than circumstances warranted, he avoided the stark choice "between entities which could rapidly be labelled either 'Liberalism' or 'Conservatism'", preferring to posit an affinity between them so as to preserve the receding chances of Tory reunion. "He who turns from Pall Mall towards the Park between the Reform and the Carlton Clubs will perceive that each of those stately fabrics is mirrored in the windows of the other", he wrote in 1856. He had a penchant for illusions, optical and otherwise.

Elected at the tender age of twenty-two to represent the small proportion of enfranchised citizens at Newark, where the Duke of Newcastle continued to hold sway, he moved on to become the parliamentary spokesman for those gentlemen of "acquired advantages" and "immense superiority" at Oxford. The "People's William" of later fame was nowhere in sight. "His awareness of vocation and mission", explains Shannon, "required no mandate from any form of popular authority", and he looked upon schemes for "parliamentary reform as a controversial but unsubstantiated diversion of energy". To him, "the nature of 'democracy' would always remain highly idiosyncratic" and never more so than when it improbably acclaimed him. By the late 1850s, he was puzzled and at a bit ashamed to find himself cast as a popular hero, a status that contrasted markedly with his "social unpopularity" at Westminster. In the General Election of 1865, he was relieved of the "great adieu" (Shannon's phrase) of his constituency at Oxford, and arrived "unmuzzled" (Derby's phrase, appropriated by Palmerston) to plunge into the decisive depressing preponderance, whirlpools of South Lancashire

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(Gladstone's own flourish), where he nearly sank.

It remains to be seen how Shannon will deal with the long denouement that followed Gladstone's "great days of the 1850s and 1860s". In particular, one wonders whether his revisionism will extend to his own splendid work on Gladstone's involvement in the Bulgarian agitation of the late 1870s. Needless to say, the diaries were not open to Shannon's scrutiny in 1963, when he wrote that important book. He would be well advised to distance himself from the diaries to a greater extent hereafter. For all their richness, they do not facilitate an ordering of priorities. Patting himself upon the back, Shannon intersperses long compilations in which episodes of "domestic scuffling" (the matrimonial problems of in-laws and the religious vagaries of siblings, for example) jostle in awkward contiguity with expenditures on art and porcelain, allusion to legislative activity, biographical checklists, travel itineraries, social engagements, self-flagellations, and efforts to rescue fallen women. While it is mildly interesting to learn that "Gladstone finished *Jane Eyre*, which he judged a very remarkable but jarring book", his addition to a minor melodrama by Dion Boucicault and his attendance at a Punch and Judy show might well have been left unrecorded. Those who hunger after such details may proceed directly to the diaries themselves.

At the point where Shannon has taken leave of him, Gladstone was reaching beyond the electoral and intellectual confines of Oxford. His diaries, edited in the rooms at Christ Church, that he occupied as an undergraduate, remain anchored there. H. C. G. Matthew, "faced by the sometimes bewildering obscurity of Gladstone's more cryptic journal notes, abbreviations, and references", was relieved to discover "that somewhere in Oxford, someone always knows the answer". Presumably, by dint of such "immense superiority" each of his informants would have readily known the composer of the national anthem.

The seventh and eighth volumes of *The Gladstone Diaries*, each staggeringly priced, encompass the period of the diaries' first premiership. They differ from their predecessors by the inclusion of previously unpublished Cabinet minutes and some 800 letters, all interwoven to clarify and illuminate the text, though occasionally tending to overshadow it. To pay tribute to Dr Matthew's editorial talents would, by now, be redundant. It suffices to say that he has unflinchingly maintained the standards we have come to expect of him. Gladstone, "unique among Victorian Prime Ministers", and possibly among all Victorian statesmen, "in keeping systematic records" deserves no less.

The introductory essay, lengthy and substantive, follows gloriously in the tradition set by Foot and since perpetuated by Matthew. It is a major contribution to Gladstonian studies and thus to the field of nineteenth-century political culture. It tends to emphasize elements of continuity. Chief among them are the weight and durability of the Peelite heritage. Like his mentor, Gladstone eschewed any "overall legislative programme" which, by no means precluded legislative achievement, he clung to the concept of a "minimalist" state even after many of his colleagues as well as the rank and file of his party had begun to take a more interventionist view. However adept at combining "genuineness" and "morality", he dissociated himself from those like the 14th Earl of Derby, whose "occasional deviation" from the "excitement of the game to draw him off from the sustained and exhausting efforts of the high art".

These frames of reference, though decidedly not the constructions he personally placed upon them, are strikingly similar to the ones adopted by Maurice Cowling and others in recent interpretations of High Politics. Yet Gladstone, surrounded during his first - and, as he mistakenly assumed, last - ministry by men who were "remarkably unambitious" as High Churchmen, conceiving his primary responsibility in office to be that of coordinating and supervising the work of his ministers, would not have been so concerned with the

ultimately "replace the need for bargains between governments" and so lead to the effective extinction of foreign policy. Similarly, a "union of heart and character" would suffice as colonial policy. "Ireland was for Gladstone a preoccupation, not an interest, an embarrassment, not an intellectual attraction", which he approached with caution and initially on strictly ecclesiastical grounds. Here, according to Matthew, Gladstone operated "in the spirit of Edmund Burke", with all of the limitations, but also all of the determination, that that implies.

What disclosures do these newest volumes hold in store for Shannon and other potential biographers, among whom one hopes to count Matthew himself in due course? Gladstone's intimacy with John Bright, whom Shannon describes as having played Sancho Panza to his Quixote in earlier times, was surprisingly strong and sincere. "In cosseting Bright," Gladstone cosseted Nonconformity, explains Matthew, who goes on to observe that Gladstone "was much more successful with the particular than with the general". More than a channel of communication to one of Liberalism's sectional interests, however, Bright provided steadfast support and significant tutelage. Addressing him, Gladstone strove to make his policies "agreeable to your views", vouchsafed to him many a "confession of faith", and expressed an almost familial solicitude: "Pray take care of yourself, & do not be troubled to write unless it is quite good for you." Knowing that his "plain speech" would always be understood, Gladstone never could to Russell or Lowe, to whom he once apologized for "officiousness". In the process of cosseting, he evinced a genuine respect: "If I never argue with nor intrude [sic] you, it is not from indifference. If you find that the acts we have done do not come into sharp conflict with your convictions, the announcement will fill me with unalloyed joy & satisfaction."

Gladstone "read Dollinger" and, more informatively, conveyed his ruminations in correspondence. His letters to Manning, wonderfully full and candid, help especially to prise open some of the more tightly bound journal entries. Most of all, however, the assembled materials testify to the rock-like cohesion of Gladstone's daily concerns, which defy compartmentalization. Working closely with successive chief whips, he was vastly more attentive to party and parliamentary affairs than has been popularly supposed. He fretted about a few peccant paragraphs that had crept into the pages of the *Daily News*, cultivated Levy-Lawson of the *Daily Telegraph*, and was "really ashamed" to have given "trouble" to Deane of *The Times*. He tended to the management of his estates and to the "wounded soul" of Laura Thistlethwayte, whom he afforded "peeps into my unintelligent self" in a series of riving letters, appropriately relegated to an appendix. He "had a good deal of discussion" with Josephine Butler about the Contagious Diseases Act "and was greatly struck & pleased with her", and he prophetically defended his pledge to uphold Belgian neutrality, "an enterprise which we incline to think Quixotic".

He prayed relentlessly and read voraciously, interpolating the edifying digestion of sermons for a second furtive glance at Stoddard's translation of Ponceas's discourse on Divine Love. On December 29, 1874, he turned sixty-five, and found himself "in illia of the mental repose I had hoped engaged in a controversy which cannot be mild, & which presses upon both mind & body. But I do not regret anything except my insufficiency and my unworthiness in this & in all things: yet I would wish that the rest of my life were as worthy as my public life. In its nature & intent, to be made an offering to the Lord Most High."

The controversy in question was his impending resignation from office. Before it was delivered, he finished George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, which he had been reading (among numerous other things) for a fortnight, and which he pronounced to be another "very fine book". Gladstone's responses that of coordinating and supervising the work of his ministers, would not have been so concerned with the

The unsinkable Secretary at War

Norman Gash

KENNETH BOURNE

Palmerston: The Early Years 1784-1841

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There has been no lack of books about Palmerston in the past fifty years. H.C.F. Bell's two-volume life, for long the standard authority, appeared in 1936. Then came C. K. Webster's classic monograph on his 1830-41 foreign policy; selections of correspondence by B. Connell; P. Guedalla and Lord Sudley on his relationships with the Queen, Gladstone and Princess Lieven; a scholarly book by Noel Pemberton in 1954; a semi-biographical study by D. Southgate in 1966; and a solid one-volume life by Jasper Ridley in 1970. Why, one may ask, write another? The answer is that, despite the merits of much previous writing on Palmerston, difficulties of access to the Broadlands archives imposed serious limitations on what could be done. Kenneth Bourne's book is in a class of its own for its detail in which it is written. As far as one can tell, this will be the definitive life of Palmerston. Nobody is going to face the drudgery of going through that mass of material again with so little prospect of adding significantly to what Professor Bourne provides or differing significantly from his conclusions. This is a monumental work in both senses. It marks an epoch in Palmerstonian historiography; it is also a scholarly achievement which will earn the admiration of fellow-historians.

Yet with the feast comes the reckoning. This is not a book for those who wish as much to be entertained as to be informed. Bourne has planned his biography on a large, leisurely scale that allows space for the exploration of every aspect of Palmerston's long career. Students of early nineteenth-century British history who wish, for example, to know more about university education in England and Scotland, electioneering, army administration, government patronage, the love affairs of the aristocracy or the staffing of the diplomatic service (these last two incidentally not entirely dissociated) will find indispensable information here. Despite these digressions, however, the architecture of the book remains firm. With so much material to digest, the sense of narrative movement is sometimes lost, but its purpose and direction is never in doubt.

Nevertheless, this is a book that is difficult to read and even more difficult to assimilate. Part of the responsibility for this (though only part) can be placed on the publishers or (more fairly perhaps) on the present economic state of the book-selling trade. Assuming that one more volume of the same size will be required to complete the biography, the total length of the whole work will be over three-quarters of a million words, exclusive of notes and indexes. This is a crushing load to be carried by two volumes; three would have been much more manageable. As it is, with 636 pages of text in this volume alone, something like 600 words have to be crammed on each page. A heavy book and small type do not make for enjoyable reading. Bourne's scholarship - and his readers' comfort - deserve better than this.

For those who, undeterred, read on, there are rich returns both in the new information here presented and in the material which, if not new, is restated with convincing authority. There were always puzzles about Palmerston's war in the minor post of Secretary at War from 1809 to 1827. What gave him his subsequent taste for foreign affairs? How did he come to be a Canningtonite or a supporter of Catholic Emancipation or of the Reform Act of 1832? These matters, on which previous biographies were either vague or silent, are now satisfactorily explained.

What also emerges very clearly is how slowly Palmerston matured as a politician. The *Journal of Proceedings* of 1830 by way of the offer of the chancellorship of the exchequer in 1809 is of course a legend that should have been buried long ago. In those days that office was of no great consequence and when the prime minister was in the House of Commons it was usually annexed to his official post of First Lord of the Treasury. It was simply that in 1809 Perceval was overworked and wanted a useful subordinate by his side, a kind of financial parliamentary under-secretary. The situation was not particularly attractive and two men had already turned it down before Palmerston was approached. Even so, made Palmerston refuse it. In these early days in fact he gave little indication of what he was to become later. He was unambitious though hard-working, assiduous over detail, but lacking confidence in public, and a poor speaker. In effect he seemed to have the qualities of a bureaucrat rather than of a politician.

In private life he had an assortment of irregular relationships with women and at least one illegitimate child. Lady Cowper, who was to marry him in 1839 after the death of her first husband, had become his mistress some thirty years earlier. Neither, however, observed too exact a fidelity to this long-standing and notorious liaison. He was also worried financially, dabbled on the stock-market with little immediate success, and acquired as a result a slightly dubious reputation. It is not surprising that for the first twenty years of his parliamentary career he appeared to his seniors in the government as a useful but by no means indispensable official underling. Though his apparently permanent occupation of the office of Secretary at War was something of a curiosity, nobody seemed disposed to offer him any important promotion.

Yet there was a certain protective colouring in this long chrysalis period of Palmerston's career. He was too unimportant to attract great enmity and too cautious to make great errors. As early as 1810 Lady Minto remarked that "he never will boast of shining talents, or great views, but he is the greatest degree, and will always swim where greater talents might sink". For nineteen years Palmerston was content to swim in his own little backwater. His Irish title, inherited when he was only eighteen, deprived conventional political honours of any special attraction and his debt-encumbered estates made a steady public salary uncommonly useful. In that aristocratic era, when prime ministers were brokers rather than butchers, ministerial posts conferred on their occupants a species of tenant-right. They could be ejected or bribed to resign at any time but only in the rarest of circumstances would they be ejected without agreed compensation. When, in the course of his ministerial reconstruction of 1821-22, Lord Liverpool wanted the secretaryship at War to give to the discontented department of Woods and Rivers with a seat in the Lords and the prospect of succeeding in time as Postmaster General, Palmerston's refusal of these rather secondary prizes, however, was accepted without ill-will. Canning, when putting together his patchwork cabinet in 1827, first offered Palmerston the chancellorship of the exchequer, then changed his mind and proposed instead a colonial preceptorship, first Jamaica and then (raising the price) India. Both were declined but Palmerston still stayed on in his old office.

It is clear also that Palmerston, during Canning's lifetime, could hardly be called a Canningtonite in the sense of a personal follower of that erratic genius. The accident of events and a sense of duty with Canning's style and aims made him a kind of posthumous Canningtonite but for Canning himself he had the same reservations as many other contemporaries. Similarly, in the matter of Catholic Emancipation, common-sense rather than principle, expediency rather than religion, took him over to the Liberal side. As for Palmerston's rapid transition from Liverpool's conservative administration of 1827 to Grey's reform ministry

of 1830 by way of Canning, we have what the available evidence suggests; namely, that personal loyalty to the government's failure to secure election of 1826 played a large part in alienating Palmerston from the Tory elements of the Liverpool ministry and in making him look more like a Whig who (for reasons of his own) had supported him on the occasion.

This, as it turned out, was a fortunate shift of allegiance since the Liberal party was going to be in power for most of the succeeding thirty years. Palmerston was lucky, in the rest of his career; it is one of the valuable gifts a politician can have. He was the inexperienced Whigs of 1830, an office-hardened veteran like Palmerston was a decided acquisition. What he expected to be given was leadership of the House of Commons with perhaps the Home Office. Lord Grey, having had the Foreign Office refused by first Holland and then Lansdowne, turned for his next attempt to his new Canningtonite. It was a crucial and yet largely fortuitous turn of events. The importance of the accidental, which historians are sometimes slow to recognize, can rarely be illustrated. It launched Palmerston against his expectations, into a career as Foreign Minister for which he felt ill-prepared.

Yet, if he was lucky, he also had good general help to make his life at Palmerston at the Foreign Office not every Whig's idea of a reward appointment and when Melbourne returned to office in 1835 he proved to move him from that post to position as he had just received Brougham for similar reasons from Lord Chancellors. Palmerston, however, was not to be bribed or intimidated; Melbourne lacked the courage to drop him entirely and Palmerston had his first proof that he showed himself as tough as the superiors as he did to his own old service inferiors, he would push his own way. It was an ill-learned lesson that he moved later against the irascible Lord John Russell. One of the reasons, one imagines, why Palmerston found the Liberal party congenial political home was that it contained nobody strong enough to stand up to him until the advent of the Peelite Gladstone twenty-five years later.

An assessment of Palmerston's Foreign Minister will no doubt be part of the second volume, though enough is said here to suggest that it will not be unfavourable. In the 1830-41 period, Bourne observes, Palmerston showed himself better than Castlereagh in his realistic approach to European problems, better than Canning in his management of the conference diplomacy and better than Russell in the last decade of his diplomacy than in the last. What is more important is that the quintessential Palmerston is always being distilled from the elaborate detail of the first volume - the political energy, the justness, the common-sense and occasionally the manner, the increasing assurance, and the hard-headedness that gained him no small but made him such a formidable enemy. When the rest is forgotten, the pervading sense of Palmerston's personality that one carries away from this difficult but masterly biography.

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Studies in Ruskin: Essays in Honor of Van Akin Burd
244pp. Ohio University Press. \$20.95.
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When Ruskin, in retrospective moods, identified the turning points of his life he was likely to give odd and inconsistent reasons for changes of heart and opinion. Students of his writing are used to this, just as they know that those "tut-tut-cutes" he often invokes, or his "wisest guides and counsellors", were not necessarily places that taught him much, or friends who advised him well. But on one time and place Ruskin and his commentators have always agreed: the stay in Turin in 1858 was a watershed.

In 1858, his fortieth year, Ruskin began the fifth and final volume of *Modern Painters*, which turned out to have few affinities with the first volume of the book which had made him famous. He became disillusioned with the Pre-Raphaelitism he had helped to promote, loosened his ties with the Working Men's College (an institution about which he had never had illusions) and realized, as a result of cataloguing the Turner bequest, that there was disturbingly more to his most admired artist than his earlier writing had dared to imagine. In 1858 his paedophilia became apparent, with the "and-girl of Turin", she was a "girl of about ten, with her black hair over her eyes & half naked - bare-limbed to above the knees - and beautifully limbed - lying on the sand like a snake". This was also the year in which he met Rose La Touche. Ruskin's desire for old master painting swung then, from the *quattrocento* towards the *seicento*, and he came to believe that the earlier art had been mistaken in not acknowledging man's "animal nature". Most of all, biographers have always believed, it was his summer in Turin that led to his "conversion", when "any evangelical beliefs were put away, to be debated of no more".

All this we know or infer from Ruskin's later public writings, and especially from *Fraseria*, his autobiography. John Hayman has now performed the useful service of gathering the daily letters Ruskin sent to his parents in Denmark Hill while travelling on the continent in the summer. The letters greatly augment our knowledge of Ruskin's mind during those months. They also suggest new lines of enquiry for the Ruskinian, especially into the Swiss origins of his later artistic and spiritual interests, with John Simon, the public health administrator. One must note the less record of a disappointment about the scope of this edition: not the letters of John Hayman nor its print the other half of the correspondence, the letters preserved at Bombride School that John James Ruskin sent to his son. At

The way of the unconverted

Tim Hilton

recognized today through literature. In Milton's "Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints..." (some literary people will also understand the joke in T. S. Eliot's "Cousin Nancy") were in Ruskin's early years regarded more directly. Margaret Ruskin, with others of her generation, imagined that these unlettered Lutherans of the Piedmontese valleys were the embattled survivors of a pure and primitive Christianity. This belief was no longer common when Ruskin reached his middle years, though it survived for some time in Presbyterians. Ruskin knew that the whole

Ruskin left England in May, as soon as he had finished arranging the 19,000 Turner drawings that were stored in the National Gallery basements, and travelled through Germany to Switzerland. At Rheinfelden, he for the first time in his life drew on a Sunday - a sketch of orchards he later considered to be a "total change in his habits of mind". One would not think so from the drawing itself (which is in Ruskin's diary) but it is clear from these letters that an experience of 1858 created an *impasse* in his own art. Ruskin had never been, nor was he to be until his drawings of Venice in 1876, an instinctive artist (and those uncontrolled drawings are not his most successful works, only his most unlikely); but his graphic work had always had a convincing relationship to his theories, his taste. It is not easy to understand what was now happening to Ruskin's drawing, and Hayman's dingy illustrations do not help, but I surmise that he was caught, as he approached each sheet of his paper, by differences between Turner and Pre-Raphaelitism that his writings had sought to minimize. Now, his taste was more creative than his art, and when he sought Turner's sites to replicate them in his own watercolours he found that he could produce only "sketching". At the same time, his will for Pre-Raphaelite "finishing" failed to help his pen especially in landscape subjects.

The result was that he turned to copying, an exercise that, almost by definition, has no place in the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic of making art directly from nature. But this was arrested his abilities. After seven weeks' work in the Turin art gallery on Veronese, he was caught, as the Queen of Sheba, he managed to produce only a few scraps of overworked watercolours. These were not representations of the whole work but of details within it. Hayman does not tell us whether this is so, but it is likely that Ruskin was doing same-size copying. On a picture as big as the Veronese this would preclude an overall feel for the work and - surely! - emphasize the futility of the operation. Hayman would not agree. He believes that the copy was "immensely important" because it

provided Ruskin with an alternative to stunting in the streets of Turin and forced him to forego listlessness with disciplined effort. Perhaps he even achieved something akin to trance in his contemplation of the detail he attempted to copy...

This is decided. But it is either a misfortune or an accomplishment to go into a trance: it is not an achievement; copying is not necessarily more "disciplined" than the kind of thinking and observation that Ruskin used to do in every sentient moment; and his "listlessness" was in fact that half-fretful pause between periods of work known to all - many - artists; and used as an aid to renew themselves.

Although his work failed, in this summer Ruskin feels to me more like an artist than at any other time in his life. In Turin, we can just about imagine him making an original contribution to art itself. Somebody should have told him to start by copying the Veronese in oil, from memory, in the open air. That would have shaken him; he was not too old for the inspiration that comes with a change of medium and outlook. Instead, he seems to have given up some of the respect for the religion that was his mother's - for whom, I believe, he had written the second volume of *Modern Painters* about the *quattrocento* after his first unaccompanied tour to Italy in 1847. The religion in question (or rather its residue) was that of the Vaudois, on which Margaret Ruskin had long held "unswerving convictions". The Vaudois or Waldensians, most readily

together. But one is not far into this handsomely produced hook - it has the full panoply of the best academic publishing - before feeling that Cate's commentary is unreliable. Ruskin was not "engaged as art teacher for the three La Touche children". George Allen is incorrectly described as Ruskin's "young friend" and he did not print Ruskin's books but published them. Lady Mount-Temple was not known as "George"; that was someone else, John Hobbs. It should not be necessary to have to correct so many mistakes, of which the above are a



Ruskin's study of an eagle from life. For publication details see caption on page 1154.

business was a myth, and so did John James, but neither of them would have dreamt of taking issue with Margaret Ruskin about it: what would have been the point of contending with an old lady in her mid-seventies, who happily believed what she had always believed?

My feeling is that Ruskin's later accounts of his "unconversion" in the Turin Waldensian chapel were exaggerated in order to mock the conversion experience of John La Touche, Rose's father, whose obdurate Irish Protestantism was in communion with the Waldensian church, and not at all in communion with the Christian thinking of the man who wished to marry his adolescent daughter. Hayman offers no thoughts on the matter. But since one cannot be sure from the 1858 letters that any "unconversion" really took place (which makes me more confident of my suspicions of Ruskin's motives in the 1870s) we should have been given more, in Hayman's annotation and introduction, about Ruskin's thoughts and movements (he went on a dutiful pilgrimage to Torre Pelice) at the time. Hayman's notes are thin rather than economical - he scarcely describes who the Vaudois were - and although he has worked in a number of manuscript collections he has hardly started to bring their evidence to bear on the letters he now prints.

This is too sparing a use of his labours; or else he has gone into print too soon. It is impossible at this as Ruskin's letters are published they should be fully examined. There exists a Ruskinian tradition of generous annotation and knowledgeable commentary. It was early established by E. T. Cook (with Alexander Wedderburn) in their *Library Edition* and in recent years has been brought to a high level of scholarly sympathy by Van Akin Burd. The thousands of letters that remain to be published (the ones that John Dixon Hunt, in his biographical study, assures us will not "reveal any new Ruskin") often need the most careful and thoughtful treatment precisely because they reveal things about Ruskin's life and writing that the *Library Edition* wished to forget. Of such letters, those to Ruskin's cousin John Severn are the most significant. But perhaps the most directly important to Ruskin's literary life are those to the man he unabashedly called his "Master", Carlyle.

George Cate's edition of these letters has been long awaited, and with much curiosity, by those who have an academic interest in Ruskin (although they will already have a good idea of them from the Bodleian Library transcripts, a collection apparently unknown to their present editors). And as Professor Cate says, they will find much that is "fascinating" as well as instruction in reading the letters

was this? Cate ought to have known, or ought to explain, that Peter Bayne (neither identified nor indexed in this edition) was the Ruskin's "independent family friend" who had recently published the pamphlet *Christ and Terrorism*, a foolish attempt to rebuke Carlyle for his social views.

Cate finds Carlyle's literary influence on Ruskin intangible, since Ruskin did not imitate the more obvious features of his style and did not write such "organically unfilled" books as *Senior Resaturus*. Intent on squeezing more from his cliché to claim that there is "evidence of a lack of organic unity in Ruskin himself", he overlooks the most obvious, and perhaps most important, of Ruskin's debts to the older writer. The model for *For's Clavigera*, Ruskin's masterpiece, was Carlyle's *Letter-Day Pamphlets*. The influences on *For's* include Carlyle and a dozen other sources - two dozen, three, right down to such childhood reading as *Noctes Ambrosianae* - and they are so well absorbed as not to be overt. But his exemplar is plain. Ruskin's publication looked to Carlyle's abandoned monthly pamphlets, and intended to resume their work. Here was an act of discipleship the more marked because it was prepared to court Carlyle's own failure, isolation, loss of friends: even the success of *For's* *Letter-Day Pamphlets* gave Ruskin inspiration as his own monthly letters continued the battle against Mammon. "Pig Philosophy" and the politics of the "Dismal-Science people".

Carlyle's support for Ruskin's crusade was generous, as their correspondence shows. Arguing against the evidence he gives us - Carlyle's "Continue, while you still have such utterances in you, to give them voice... Euget!" - Cate

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attempts to belittle Carlyle's appreciation of *For*. He is also too inclined to believe that this fifteen-year-long demonstration of Ruskin's courage reveals only his "instability of character". Cate's lack of enthusiasm has led him into errors of fact as well as of interpretation. *For* did not appear "sporadically" but monthly. It was not a coteries publication addressed to "a communal group of his followers", as Cate describes the Guild of St George (in fact anything but communal: its adherents were not even told each others' names), but to "the workmen and labourers of Great Britain", the class least likely to follow Ruskin, or read him. Cate believes that after Rose La Touche's death in 1875 *For* "reverted to reminiscences of his younger, happier days". This is, if one may so put it, exactly wrong. The autobiographical passages in *For* did not then begin. They ceased, for they had been directed at Rose. Ruskin did not believe, as Cate asserts, that he saw her ghost; and it is incorrect to say that at this time he "became a more frequent visitor at the seances held at Mrs. Couper-Temple's home at Broadlands" since he attended no such thing and had not done so since March of 1865. Cate confuses Ruskin's Franciscan studies in Florence and Assisi in 1874 with his work on Carpaccio in Venice in 1876, thereby destroying the beauty and lucidity of these separate periods; and similar misconceptions mar almost every page of his long and confident introduction.

The subject will have to be tackled again, by a scholar with some feeling for the currents of Ruskin's life and writing. That writer will be privileged, but will undertake a large task. The friendship covers the greater part of Ruskin's literary career, from the days in the early 1850s when Carlyle first looked forward to Denmark Hill (looking forward to talk with John James Ruskin as much as with his son) to the death of the older man in 1881. The historian of the relationship between the two men will find that it did not end when only one of them was alive, and the other deranged. Ruskin often became the more sane of the two mourning thought of Carlyle spurred him to further the work he believed they shared. This loss, which may have been the immediate cause of Ruskin's second mental breakdown, led him to write in his diary "greater responsibility brought on me by Carlyle's death". These are delicate and often stormy matters to disentangle, especially as Ruskin found many ways to interview Carlyle's inspiration with his own more Christian and aesthetic interests, and then with his own biography. In the last few years of his life he mingled

thoughts of Carlyle with his own idealized Scottish background, allowing memories of his "earthly master" to become confounded with thoughts of John James, of Walter Scott, and of the "land of the leal" that these men represented. This is the true subject of the "Joanna's Care" chapter of *Præterita*.

The Scottish themes that run through *For* are not only elegiac in this way. They are often associated with the Greek heroic ideal. Thus, *Præterita* opens with the arrestingly discordant statement (taken from *For*) "I am, and my father was before me, a violent Tory of the old school; - Walter Scott's school, that is to say, and Homer's". There were few people to understand this sort of conjunction (though it is likely that Ruskin spelt it out to his Balliol "disciples", often themselves Scottish). One of them was Froude, and a study of the "minority of two" which Ruskin believed he formed with Carlyle would have to include their relations with this lesser but significant figure. Froude is the key to discussion of Carlyle's and Ruskin's notions of how we should honour great men, a constant theme in their writing and the tragedy of their legacies and reputations. The perfect editor is the perfect literary executor. Froude was not absolutely ineffective in either capacity. But we might have had a clearer, more honest view of the purposes of Ruskin's life if he (as once was a possibility) had been entrusted with Ruskin's papers.

It was E. T. Cook, the editor of the thirty-nine-volume Library Edition, who most muffled Ruskin's political voice. Cook's Liberalism (born of Cook's statesmanlike evasions) was of a sort that made him recoil from the Tory background of Ruskin's thought, from the Ruskin-Carlyle-Froude relationship, and from *For* *Clavigera*. He could not stomach such activities as Carlyle's and Ruskin's support for Governor Eyre. It is a hard lesson of life that great men can hold terrifying political beliefs, but Cook would not bring himself to accept this of Ruskin, whom he loved. Unfortunately the Byre "cause" was a poor vehicle for Carlyle's and Ruskin's visionary denunciations. They wished, when something "needs to be said", to say it in the real centres, actual or symbolic, of national life. Carlyle (Froude tells us this) thought of entering Parliament to repeat what he had written in *Letter-Day Pamphlets*. Ruskin came to mingle *For* with his lectures at Oxford, whose university he took to be the heart of our cultural life (as may have been true, in the 1870s). How men should govern, in this

universe that is not governed by men's laws; how we should study, and to what ends - perhaps the ends of government - these are the themes. They appear remote, today. But the fact that our literature has not for many years attempted such a "criticism of society" is surely a loss that literary historians should consider.

They do not do so, however, perhaps because academic "English" has never been able to come to terms with Ruskin. Elizabeth K. Helsinger's *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* appears to have much in its favour. It takes Ruskin as a whole, or attempts to. It is long, as Ruskin books should be, and although its author has done no research she has read widely. The book is capably written, which adds to its air of plausibility. Yet it does not get near to its subject. Students of English literature too often imagine that they can define the activities of an art critic without reference to works of art. This is Miss Helsinger's assumption. But there is much askew about a book that discusses, at length, the Richardson brothers and Hazlitt, who were negligible art critics and interested Ruskin not one jot, and at the same time ignores - for instance - a picture by a protégé of Ruskin's (that included a portrait of his wife and was completed in his own front room. I do not mean that Millais's "The Order of Release" was necessarily an important picture for Ruskin (though I would like to ask Helsinger why it was not): I mean that her approach lacks loyalty to the relevant. Instead of considering Ruskin's taste she has set herself to worry at the chimerical proposition that "seeing and reading are not separable activities for Ruskin; they are a single activity" and in wishing to "define his relationship to English art criticism" she ignores the fact that such a relationship belongs to the history of art.

Pre-Raphaelitism, for instance, finds no mention in Helsinger's pages. Yet this painting movement was a strong, various challenge to Ruskin's taste at the time when his writing was most relevant to art. Is this not looked at things? And is it not also to the point that, although there are writers on art before the modern period, relevant art criticism belongs specifically to the avant-garde? Pre-Raphaelitism's adumbration of the problems of modernism has disarmed Helsinger. She avoids everything that made Ruskin think about art after the 1840s. The result is that the active and prescriptive critic, and much else, is lost. Helsinger sees Ruskin only in his teens, his twenties and his early thirties, and she sees him as a student of English literature. Here she makes some sound observations. She understands that Byron was important to Ruskin; she is glad to point out affinities with Wordsworth, then differences; and she knows that *The Stones of Venice* owes much to Carlyle.

Raymond E. Fitch's interesting book is weighted towards the other end of Ruskin's life. This is one step in the right direction. It is good that someone has written a general book on Ruskin that does not falter about discussing *Unto This Last*. In *The Poison Sky* Fitch gives us the best study to date of the books of the 1860s. However, in expanding his doctoral dissertation (which concerned Ruskin and mythological theory in those years) he has not ventured far enough beyond the period he knows best. He is wary of *For* *Clavigera*, and he has been persuaded by the old manufacturers of successful books. But to learn to be a Ruskinian and not take on *For* is to learn to swim on dry land; and not to realize that the desolate, exhausted autobiography is the record of Ruskin's subservience to John Ruskin (that hater of *For*) is to miss the first problem of the connection between Ruskin's life and his writing.

This said, one can be grateful to Fitch for his approach to *The Centus of Aglaia*, *The Queen of the Air*. On the *Centus* he has some good pages. They will strike a resonant chord in those who are Ruskin specialists. The *Centus* is difficult because it was employed a "manager" of writing, vulgarly termed "free association", by most modern commentators. The *Centus* is essential to the mature Ruskin. As Fitch can demonstrate, this elusive, rhetorical prose has its own coherence. But this is apparent only if you know Ruskin's writings rather



One of two sketches of tree growth by Ruskin, reproduced from *The Ruskin Art Collection at Oxford: Catalogues, Notes and Instructions, Volume XII of the Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin* edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn.

well. E. T. Cook's annotations to the *Centus*'s obscure passages are to be found in the nineteenth volume of the Library Edition, which first reprinted (from the original manuscript) the forgotten book. These generous footnotes are excellent, a model. They were copied out, though not acknowledged, in Joan Evans's hostile biography of Ruskin. This was to demonstrate both her own expertise and her subject's lamentable failure to communicate with his readers. To this *locus classicus* of Ruskin scholarship and bad faith Fitch has returned, as though to show his own credentials. They are genuine. His exegesis of "the web of these old enigmas", as Ruskin described it, is more than competent. Perhaps Fitch should next try to write a book about *For* *Clavigera*.

For, which in Elizabeth Helsinger's judgment is "more and more a response to private need and not to public responsibilities" (how unlike "own writing" and which lacks the "organic unity" so firmly desiderated by George Allan Cate, has none the less a number of moments in which the public and private Ruskin come together, in wonderfully crafted confessions of the incidents of his unhappy life; and such moments are so much to be treasured that I cannot think why Helsinger and Cate discount them. One such is Ruskin's mystical experience in Venice in the Christmas season of 1876, recounted in the *For* of a couple of months later. Van Akin Burd, the doyen of Ruskin scholars, will shortly publish a study of "The Christmas Story", with its text. In preparation for that book he has now issued *Ruskin, Lady Mount-Temple and the Spiritualists*, a lecture given to the present-day Guild of St George. As so often, Professor Burd's consultation of manuscript collections has given clearer outline to matters that were heretofore, especially in this case, shadowy. Ruskin's belief in the spirit world was as lively and as much subject to mood as were his other convictions. This belief or half-belief sometimes marches with and sometimes mingles with his Christianity. It is on occasion "scientific", as Ruskin understood the word, and at other times it is deluded. From about 1876 it is by turns or at the same time deluded, "scientific" and mystical.

Here we need Burd's sympathetic researches, for this is an area that has always been difficult for Ruskinians. The first problem was Rose La Touche's elevation, from 1876 or 1878 to Ruskin's communion of the end. When E. T. Cook was preparing the Library Edition in the early 1930s he decided that he could not print in most direct evidence (some of it was in any case withheld from him by Joan Severn) of Ruskin's madcap madneses. Or, when he was able to print such matter because of its integral place in another context, he hid it in the large forests of the Library Edition simply by not giving it mention in Volume 39, the *Index*. What else could Cook do? He could not tell the world how, while Ruskin was living in a Sandgate lodging house (a matter itself tricky enough to explain) Rose's spirit had ordered the old professor to marry little - (I think I myself will withhold her name) - a woman who would help him to fulfil his mission. This was later, but for the germans to Burd's theme, *For* the "demonstrations" and the "visions" which were presented to him by broadlands by Lady Mount-Temple did not so much convince Ruskin of their validity as end his mind elsewhere. It went to that cathedral of thought that was the Guild of St George, and its noble expression in *For* *Clavigera*.

Only one of the papers presented to Van Akin Burd in *Studies in Ruskin*, that by James Dearden on the publishing history of *The King of the Golden River*, is the result of the kind of scholarship practised by the dedicated. The other contributions are mostly generalized essays. Two are them, by Francis Townsend and Mary Lutyens, consist of warmed-over gossip about Ruskin's marriage; one is especially unworthy. One essay is significant. It is Robert Hewison's "Notes on the Construction of *The Stones of Venice*". Mr Hewison is a bold Ruskinian who knows how to go to his sources and make use of them. It was he who suddenly grasped the fact that makes sense of the sequence of notebooks Ruskin filled in Venice when preparing for *The Stones of Venice*. Now points out how *The Stones of Venice* depends on the political position of the Ultra-Tories in the English politics of the 1820s and 1830s. This view of Ruskin's politics does not originate with Hewison (Ruskin himself tells us quite about it) and the case is not adequately documented. But it is good that the real origins of Ruskin's social thought have now been presented for examination.

The adventurer makes good

J. W. Burrow

J. A. W. GUNN, JOHN MATTHEWS, DONALD M. SCHUMAN and M. G. WIBE (Editors)

Benjamin Disraeli: Letters
Volume 1, 1815-1834. 482pp.
0 8020 5523 0
Volume 2, 1835-1837. 458pp.
0 8020 5587 7
University of Toronto Press. £37 each volume.

Disraeli's early career is not merely well known, it is, to a greater extent than any other British politician's, folklore. Who, having read it, forgets, for example, the first meeting with "young Gladstone" at Lord Lyndhurst's, and the "swan, very white and tender and stuffed with truffles, the best company there"? The swan is the mnemonic, of course, like the "ysters, Guinness and broiled bones" at the supper-party at the Carlton after the state opening of his - and, the Queen's - first Parliament. Moreover the extraordinary fulfilment of his political career, after so many setbacks, has retrospectively endorsed what would otherwise have been a fatuous or pathetic sense of his own capacities and destiny: in the perspective it provides the early life becomes portentous, a collage of remembered images and prophetic sayings. "I could rule the House of Commons." "Though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me." The outlandish figure, ringleted, extravagantly waistcoated, garishly rouged, haranguing the mob from the balcony of the Red Lion at High Wycombe, and howled down on his first attempt to address the House of Commons, seems to need, like Napoleon on the bridge at Arcola, a Gros or David to commemorate it - a major difference being that in Disraeli's case the trajectory of success and failure is reversed.

But even had he died at thirty-three at the end of 1837, the point at which the second of the first two volumes of his superb new edition of his correspondence ends, he would still have had an unusually interesting and integral place in another context: a strain of the *picures* in him, "adventurer" in his disapproving contemporaries' word; it is no surprise to find him appreciating *Gil Blas* and recommending Cellini's autobiography. The letters encourage one to read his career in the terms these analogies suggest, rather than in the prophetic folkloric or epic mode, because of course they lack what no cartoon or biographer can entirely direct himself of the perspective of hindsight. Disraeli during these years, though exhibiting much energy and perseverance, was also quite literally waiting for something to turn up; chiefly, of course, a seat in Parliament, but the Micaewah connotation is not inappropriate.

It is no detraction from the fascination of the two volumes, admirably edited to the high standard we have come to expect from Toronto, or from the rich promise of a collection of letters clearly destined to rival Byron's and Macaulay's, to say that they contain so far no major revelations and that if anything they enhance rather than detract from one's admiration for Lord Blake's biography. The chief gap, Disraeli's letters to his mistress Lady Sykes, remains, though the editors say they have not given up hope. Forty per cent of these volumes, however, consists of previously unpublished material, and there are enticing promises of much more to come.

In any case, the effect of reading a full collection of letters is quite different from that of a biography, offering satisfactions, can provide, Letters, compared with even the most leisurely historians' prose, come closer to the tempo of life. They do not merely describe or analyse protracted frustration or anxiety, and Disraeli in these years experienced both; they re-enact them, catching specks of time that in sunlight. If these letters do nothing to rescue Disraeli's shaky reputation for truthfulness, they do

enhance one's respect for his pertinacity and resilience, his courage - the quality Gladstone eulogized in his posthumous tribute - and high spirits in the face of the hostility he so wantonly aroused and the difficulties he extravagantly incurred. As he said himself, "I rather like a row", and he not only suffered but indulged in, and enjoyed, scurrilous personal attacks, in the language of the *Edinburgh Gazette*: "The unlettered editor of the *Globe*, as ignorant of the history as he is of the language of his country... sought refuge in the vile and vulgar expedient..." Rows, like his notorious quarrel with O'Connell, brought attention, and Disraeli, the evidence of his letters, was a happy paper-warrior, always convinced, sometimes on rather slight evidence, that he had had the best of it. As Bagehot said of Palmerston, "he did not at all despise the common part of his mind".

That was one idiom, for public hostilities. Another, still more remote from modern taste, was the arabesque of compliment which made a few letters here read with hindsight like prototype-testing for the Windsor Faery: "that that pen, placed assuredly from the pinion of a bird of Paradise, been idle or creative?" Disraeli belonged to a generation unafraid of hyperbole, but few played at it with such zest and lack of inhibition, or understood it better, as presumably Lady Blessington, the owner of the quill in question, did also. The growing maturity one can watch in the early letters is largely a matter of self-knowledge and the ability to vary the tone easily and at will. The callow bombast of the letters written when he was twenty-one to Murray and Lockhart, about the proposed new newspaper, the *Representative*, to be published by the former and edited by the latter, is itself sufficient exonerations from the charge that he rushed them into a fiasco; if they were not warned by it, they deserved what they got. The letters from his first two European tours, juvenile - especially the first - in their conventional expressions of admiration and in an understandable preoccupation with food, also have touches of sharp observation, like the Jinglesque caricature of the Irishman in the hotel: "How do you do Sir, wonderful city this Sir wonderful may have you seen the crucifixion by Vandeyke, wonderful picture Sir wonderful Sir".

On his third and best-known tour, through the Mediterranean in 1830-31, Disraeli is already marvellously excited by the sight of the ruins of ancient Greece, and by the sight of the Albanian brigands and Albanian warriors, but even in his intoxication candid, observant, and amused at his own situation in a way that is lost in the scented boudoir-orientalism of, say, *Tancred*. But the pen that could describe Ramsgate as "that glory of Kent and first of watering places, and worthy rival of Ems and Wiesbaden" could hardly fail to rise to the occasion in Cadiz or Constantinople. It is tempting to quote at length: the splendour, vigour, for example, of General Don Governor of Gibraltar, with his entourage like a small German court, going in state for a ten-minute drive and replacing a foraging cap by his plumed hat on getting out of his coach to view a cave full of monkeys; "and we travel back to the cottage, Meredith, my friend, the Governor, and the cocked hat, each in a seat".

A striking if predictable quality in Disraeli's response to foreign lands was a total lack of the Protestant or progressive censoriousness which marked that of so many of his contemporaries, including Gladstone. In Spain "a wonderful collection of establishments covers the land with a privileged class, who are perpetually producing some effect". The Turkish Grand Vizier is "a consummate politician, unrivalled as a dissembler in a country where dissimulation is the principal portion of their moral culture" - a comment more significant in its cool relativism and casualness than the obvious bravado of the more notorious reference to "the delight of being made much of by a man who was daily deceiving half the province".

Most of these letters, except the last, are to his father. It was after his return and the death of her fiancé that his chief correspondent became his sister Sarah. His feelings for her were clearly deep but not incestuous, and speculations on the relations of nineteenth-century men-of-letters with their sisters must ponder "My darling", "My sweet". Sarah is the recipient of his political hopes and of his pleasure, in, as he sees them, his frequent dashing of his hopes of a seat buoyantly, but ambition, as the fragmentary diary also printed here shows, was a torment: "I am dying for action". Sarah also enjoys vicariously what was in the circumstances a solid political achievement: breaking into high society. The small dinner parties common with the minor authors, savants and travellers to which Disraeli was born as his father's son give way first to vulgar mercantile splendour in Piccadilly - "the table and sideboard groined with silver wares and massy flagons, the drawings for China, bijouterie and Indian screens, like Baldoche's shop" - and finally to the empyrean of Lord Hertford's and Lady Londonderry's, with the latter at a fancy-dress ball as Cleopatra "in a dress literally embroidered with emeralds and diamonds from top to toe. It looked like armour, and she like a Rhinoceros".

Disraeli's reporting generally owed more to the eye than the ear; the account of Peel, for example, whom Disraeli, who was Lyndhurst's man, never met, attacking his turbot "most lustily with a knife". Sometimes the eye is almost an auctioneer's: the candelabra in the middle of immense size and covered with groups of shepherds and shepherdesses, the middle mounted on green velvet; even the saltcellars and handles of knives

and forks were china. And a Victorian satirist could have done much, unfairly, with the picture of Disraeli appraising his future wife's husband's table-silver.

Social success was enjoyable and useful, but in other respects his life in this period was a succession of projects, mostly abortive apart from his novels, which made money, and some disastrous: the *Representative*, Epick, written in a fine frenzy for immortal fame and ready money, finished "to my entire satisfaction" and promptly forgotten when it flopped; the dabbings, still rather mysterious, with European émigré groups and in international politics and high finance. The search for a great coup began early. "On the Mexican mines I rest my sheet anchor", he wrote in 1825; he was still paying for his confidence, as Blake showed, decades later. Disraeli had a good deal in common with the promoter of dubious companies who is dangerous because he is half-gulled by his own enthusiasm and eloquence. The bold imagination and eternal optimism which sustained him in his search for a political career and which, schooled into patience, ruthlessness and tactical finesse, brought him success in it, also nearly ruined him. This is an aspect of his life which found no place in the letters to Sarah but which left copious testimony in his letters to his creditors. It is one of the cases where no description can convey the same impression as a sequence of letters whose essence is repetition and the pathos of some (and payment) deferred: "My affairs are now nearly arranged". "The instant settlement is certain": "I pledge myself that your account shall be settled on

Saturday morning next at the latest". "In a very few days", "the final arrangement of everything". Those chiefly offered these mirages of solvency were his agent Pyne, his friend Austen, to whom he had prophetically written in 1830 "I am not squeamish about putting friendship to the test", and Culverwell, tersely but sufficiently described in the index as "tailor and creditor". As the editors nicely put it: "Disraeli went far beyond the gentlemanly habit of not paying his tailor, and actually borrowed money from him"; it did not prevent him complaining about his waistcoat.

The dunning reached a crescendo in 1837 as Disraeli's political prospects brightened: as an MP he would be immune from arrest during the session. On the eve of his election to Parliament he was begging as a favour that he should be arrested in London: "Of all things in the world preserve me from a Sheriff's Officer in my own county". Fortunately the official at High Wycombe proved bribeable, though only, as Disraeli wrote with pathetic emphasis, with "ready money". Sheriff's Officers were also paid for each writ issued, and in his future constituency of Maidstone Disraeli observed with gallows-humour "I was glad to find the Sheriff's Officer here among my staunch supporters: I suppose gratitude". The second volume ends, like that of a Victorian three-decker novel, with the hero escaping a debtor's prison by a whisker (his father's sums grumpily to have paid his most pressing debts), triumphantly elected to Parliament and recovering from the disaster of his maiden speech, and beginning to pay epistolary court to his future wife; and with the reader craving for more.

First rate, second rate

H. C. G. Matthew

ANTHONY DENHOLM
Lord Ripon 1827-1909: A Political Biography
287pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.
0 7099 0805 9

Liberal governments in the second half of the nineteenth century relied on the "whigs" for the staffing of many of their posts. These "whigs" usually appear in the textbooks as a monolithic body of worthies, enlivened spasmodically by the love life of Lord Harrington. Not surprisingly, close attention reveals a series of complex and often self-contradictory personalities. Of these, Lord Ripon, positionally categorized as a whig, was perhaps the most idiosyncratic.

Although a substantial landowner, he was not of whiggish stock; for his father, was "Prosperity" Robinson, Liverpool's chancellor of the exchequer, and ingloriously prime minister in 1828 (Ripon was born in 10 Downing Street, during his father's premiership). His career fell into no convenient pattern. In the 1850s he was involved in F. D. Maurice's Christian Socialist movement, with its interest in cooperativism and working-class education. This movement's immediate impact was limited, but it had a longer-term influence of considerable and often neglected importance. Its well-connected leaders - F. D. Maurice, Ripon, Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes (radical MP and Thomas Arnold's disciple) - linked the Broad Church Christianity of the 1830s and 40s to a radical political analysis which offered a way out to an Anglicanism which found itself increasingly narrowly based politically and socially. Its integrative social philosophy was to have a permanent effect within the labour movement.

Anthony Denholm's biography takes the importance of Ripon's Christian Socialistism as its starting point. He shows very fairly that Lucien Wolf, perhaps the very surprising choice as author of the two-decker "official" biography (1921), presented Ripon as more of a conventional whig than he was.

Ripon's career in office offers rather a daunting task to a biographer: he held as many great offices of state as he

had imposing titles. He went by the successive names and titles of Robinson, Viscount Gunderich, Earl de Grey, and Marquis of Ripon, and he was Lord President of the Council (1868-73), Viceroy of India (1880-84), Colonial Secretary (1892-95), and Lord Privy Seal (1905-9). Mr Denholm makes a fair shot at avoiding a catalogue of explanatory narratives as Ripon moved from post to post. He shows that the ideas Ripon developed in the 1850s permeated his approach to the making of the Education Act of 1870 (his chief legislative monument) and to the staunchly held radical positions which he took on India, Ireland and the colonies. Ripon declined to play the party game. He was that unusual creature in the world of politics, a man without guile and with coherently articulated and persistently held principles. His position in the House of Lords allowed him to keep his distance from much of the infighting of late-Victorian political life.

Two aspects of his career could have done with more attention. Ripon was Grand Master of English Freemasons until 1874. The role - and even indeed the membership - of Freemasons in Victorian politics is virtually

uncharted. Ripon was certainly an important Freemason, and it would have been interesting to have seen how this related to his social and political life and views - and in particular to his Christian Socialistism. The materials for this have, no doubt not survived in Ripon's own papers, but they may repose elsewhere. In 1874 Ripon caused a sensation by apostasizing to Roman Catholicism: For a man of the F. D. Maurice school this appeared a particularly eccentric act. Ripon's reasons are probably unrecoverable, and Denholm gives a sensible enough account of what they might have been. But we learn little about how Ripon - the only Roman Catholic of real political weight in late-Victorian politics - related to the Catholic community and its political aspirations, except with respect to the row about the procession of the Host which was the occasion of his resignation from Asquith's Cabinet in 1909.

Ripon was, Gladstone accurately observed, "a first rate statesman of the second rank". Mr Denholm's competent biography shows how unusual "second rank" Victorian statesmen sometimes were.

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Published August 1992. £17.50.

Harvard University Press
100 Brookline Avenue, Boston MA 02116, USA

Crewe to the Carlos

J. K. L. Walker

WILLIAM COOPER

Scenes from Metropolitan Life
214pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 333 34203 8

William Cooper has long been viewed as the precursor of the novelists of the 1950s, the pre-echo to the full-frequency-range sonorities of Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe and their followers. The label, with its patronizing overtones, is one that few writers would welcome, least of all perhaps Cooper whose characteristic tone of self-contained irony argues an altogether more independent status for his work. This tone is to be found at its most playful in his new novel *Scenes from Metropolitan Life*.

The novel appears with a curious publishing history. Originally written more than thirty years ago as a sequel to *Scenes from Provincial Life* — the work which, in 1950, established its author's reputation (and which is now reissued) — the novel ran into legal difficulties and never reached the bookshops. Cooper's habit of drawing his characters closely from life seems to have been responsible for this misfortune. Some idea of the effect that the incident had on the author may be gauged from the later chapters of his 1961 novel *Scenes from Married Life* (now also reissued), which feature a similar episode — although there it is given a happier twist.

Joe Linn, the anti-hero of all three novels, from the pre-war schoolmaster of *Scenes from Provincial Life* is now, in its belated sequel, translated into an unestablished First Division civil servant working in a Whitehall department concerned with scientific personnel and defence materiel. Joe finds civil service life agreeable enough but, as a published novelist, treats his temporary career with a becoming lack of gravity. His immediate superior and friend of long standing, Robert (seen briefly in the earlier novel as an Oxford don), is a more valued and effective official but, like his protégé seeks a career as a writer and thus equally detached from the manoeuvrings for power inside the department. These centre upon a Dr Chubb, seconded from another ministry ostensibly to help conduct a survey into the potential of two types of secret weapon but also, it is generally believed, to act as a Fifth Column for those seeking to supplant the section's unwieldy head, Sir Francis Plumer. Chubb's transparent self-seeking, name-dropping and willingness to prove, however, in the end no match for the tactical skills of his new colleagues.

The Whitehall scenes are cunningly interwoven with others focusing on the private lives of the two male protagonists. Now responsible, if not yet respectable, middle-aged men, they review their still unimpaired state and their previous disastrous affairs and, once more edge cautiously towards marriage. Robert, with the help of drinking nymphomaniac Julia, mistress of Wladislaw, a rich Polish City man, and the narrator with his pre-war girl-friend Myrtle, a central character in *Scenes from Provincial Life*. Eight years on (the novel is set in 1946-47) she is a successful commercial artist and married to Haxby, Joe's one-time rival still serving with the Army abroad. "Reflecting on the metropolitan habit of proposing marriage when 'one or both parties already had a spouse', Joe rejects the 'general convention, that a man shall propose marriage to a woman before going to bed with her. . . How much nicer it would be, I had always thought, how much more graceful and profound a compliment to propose after. Through the scenes which follow, set in such contrasting locales as Joe's seedy Camlode flat, the dining-room of the Carlos Hotel (in Connaught Place), and the fish-infused platforms of Euston Station, Joe, in ironic counterpoint to his situation in *Scenes from Provincial Life* (in which he successfully dodges Myrtle's attempts to bring him to the altar) pursues the relationship to its unhappy outcome. Robert's affair is no more satisfactory. Even his penchant for lost

souls is overborne by self-preservation as Julia careers on through an attempted seduction of Joe at her Dolphin Square flat, a tempestuous scene with Wladislaw (who "gave us a more obsessive and more active than anything we had ever felt"), towards involvement with Plumer's son. In the end, everything is much as it was at the beginning.

The acknowledged model for Robert in *Scenes from Metropolitan Life* and its companion pieces is William Cooper's friend and civil service colleague C. P. Snow. Both writers cover a certain degree of common ground in their novels, notably the workings of the upper echelons of the public service and the difficulties met by intelligent men in establishing enduring relationships with women. Their approach to their material, however, could scarcely be more different, a contrast which *Scenes from Metropolitan Life* piquantly illuminates. Robert's novels, claims Joe, depend upon "a kind of romantic and dramatic power", his own upon a kind of humour and wit. Yet in the present novel, the chromaticism of tone, reflecting Cooper's fledgling irony and his ultimately *je m'en fichiste* attitude to the world of action, eloquently undermines its narrator's presentation of his colleague as more artist than man of affairs; while the slightly Laurel-and-Hardy air about the relationship between the two men both reinforces this and yet defrosts it with the glow of real affection. William Cooper is a very good-natured writer as well as being a very clever one.

Good nature permeates *Scenes from Metropolitan Life* and its companions. One might perhaps seek its origins in what used to be thought of as a uniquely English distaste for the striking of extreme attitudes — "the peculiar kind of self-concern that always seemed to go with the deliberate making of moral choices". As Joe muses in the later *Scenes from Married Life*. In the same novel he looks back on the occasion when, at a party, he met his future wife:

"This is the right one for me. . . I remembered that statement which had expressed for me the poetic climax in human experience, falling in love. The flat of the matter was that, utterly flat as the statement was, I still had nothing whatsoever to add to it."

Here, perhaps, is the voice of Cooper the precursor, firm in its Northern (he was born and brought up in Crewe) rejection of the intellectual and literary excesses of NW3. Yet, as *Scenes from Metropolitan Life* vividly demonstrates, this is far from being the whole story. There is another side to Cooper (at least as seen through his creation Joe Linn), candidly hedonistic and anti-gallantry: the pleasures of bed, board and bank account are given due weight. Dinner at the Carlos, for example, provokes in Joe the reflection that:

A born aristocrat can have no idea of the innocent pleasure that going up in the world gives to people. . . We sat there, not necessarily remembering where we had come from, but very definitely observing where we had got to, and feeling a modest half-satisfaction. Of course, all this is something of a tease, but even so Arnold Bennett might well have felt at home at this particular table. . . *Scenes from Metropolitan Life* is steeped in this kind of engaging worldliness, with the narrator equally ready to turn his sardonic eye upon himself as on others. Cooper is a master of the sly comic aside, of the metaphorical question, as he is at buttonholing the reader with sea-green andor. Such teasing comedy must, however, be balanced by the steepest critical arrow, but such archery perhaps seeks to serve under the banner of Don Quixote rather than that of Sancho Panza. At one point in the novel, Joe echoes the words of Horace and declares: "I want to speak the truth, laughing. I'll do it or die. In the end, I'll follow the precept pretty well, but in this present highly entertaining and perceptive novel and subsequently

A dream in decline

David Montrose

JOHN GARDNER

Mickelsson's Ghosts
566pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.
0 436 1725 8

Had the late John Gardner been a less accomplished craftsman, *Mickelsson's Ghosts* might have been more an anthology of literary genres than a homogeneous work of fiction. At bottom another examination of a middle-aged American at the end of his rope, it also contains elements of the campus novel, murder mystery, and ghost story. These narrative strands are woven into a compelling novel that is always more than the sum of its (rather conventional) parts.

In his preface, Gardner acknowledges a debt to John Updike and Joyce Carol Oates. Oates is probably influential only insofar as the academic manoeuvrings on the sidelines of *Mickelsson's Ghosts* resemble those chronicled in the linked stories of *The Hungry Ghosts*; the bow to Updike recognizes, more importantly, the similarities between Peter Mickelsson and Rabbit Angstrom. Even more, though, Gardner's protagonist is a Bellovian figure, particularly reminiscent of Tommy Wilhelm from *Seize the Day* and the eponymous hero of *Herzog*. Once a full Professor of Philosophy at the Ivy League, Mickelsson now teaches — after a breakdown and a fall from fiction — at a backwater branch of the State University of New York. He is estranged from his wife and children, owes the IRS three years' back-tax, with additional fines and penalties mounting daily. Little wonder that the opening chapter finds him, nearly broke, with a crumpled apartment and a rat-trap Chevy. To crown everything, Mickelsson has real heart troubles as well as metaphorical ones.

Succumbing to a Thoreau-like dream of rural replenishment, Mickelsson suspects that he is in a house that is broken and that nothing is stolen. Creating mysteries, Gardner is deft at the deployment of red herrings. What matters seem about to be resolved, implausibility, it invariably turns out that the cause is a mistaken identity.

In the end, Gardner nearly ties narrative strands; only Mickelsson's fate remains unresolved. He escapes the legal consequences of having committed a murder, but he makes of his freedom? The "ideology" shaping human existence is the novel's separate element speaks of "The universal human life through 'one' who Mickelsson has his Nietzschean philosophy, Jessica's socialism, enemies their Marxism; others his Mormonism, a belief in UFOs, than prescribing a direct engagement (rejecting all ideology) with the world's complexity" from which he'd hoped might be Eden. Oates recognizes the need for codes and "to read the world as meaning" discover a strategy that aims to discover a bleak reality. Mickelsson flight — a mere evasion — continues. Donnie's success in finding a new way through Christianity. Toward the end of the novel, having been found to destroy his improvements to a farmhouse, Mickelsson faces a choice between reconstructing and looking for a different code that will improve on chaos. He proposes marriage to Jessica; yet the paragraphs suggest that she might be another false trail.

John Gardner is known mainly as the author of *Grendel*, a retelling of the Beowulf legend from the modern perspective. His fine work is a realistic mode — notably *October Light* — has attracted less attention. Unobtrusively developed, *Mickelsson's Ghosts* may not match *Grendel* in brilliance, but it certainly deserves stand alongside that novel as a work of Gardner's canon.

The long hello

Russell Davies

BARRY FANTONI

Stickman
207pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.50.
0 340 27199 X

I picked up the phone. It mumbled of old salt peanuts, but the voice coming out of it was bright as an orthodox dentist's eyes.

"Hello? Times Literary Supplement here."

"Well whaddya know," I said. "A talking newspaper." It was my first crack of the day, and I felt better for it. The voice didn't sound so sure.

"Listen, wiseguy," I said, the Gray's Inn accent slipping a little, "it's about the Fantoni."

"The Fantoni? Wiseguy gave this one some thought. 'Of yeah, I remember. Big Renaissance family, buddies of the Pope.' A lot of love, folks came over the line. It could have been the guy's switchboard. Or it could have been his teeth gnashing."

"Maybe you're a more recent memory of Barry Fantoni? Artist, big nose, plays clarinet."

"With his nose? I would have done better with some coffee in my head but the coffee pot was cold. In fact I was out in the trashcan under three feet of bourbon bottles."

"Actually he writes thrillers, the latest entitled *Stickman*. Having a real eye called Mike Dime. Fantoni works for a magazine called *Private Eye* too. We thought you might like something of that. Eventually, I've got nothing better to do, like buying some bicycle clips."

"OK," I started back. "I read it. It's a good one. If you want proof, it's set in a place called . . . I don't know. I can't reproduce that with just a register. It's as sweetly uncomplicated as a drink in his last first."

Mickelsson buys an old farmhouse in the Adirondacks supposedly once owned by Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, and haunted by the ghosts of two more recent inhabitants. He finds, as other heroes in contemporary American fiction have found, that the escape routes open to Natty Bumppo and Huck Finn have long gone; there is no frontier any more, no wilderness. All Mickelsson's troubles follow him into the mountains; new ones immediately arise when he falsifies a loan application to raise the purchase price.

At the centre of the novel is Mickelsson's personal and financial decline, which culminates (not altogether convincingly) when he commits a murder. Obsessed with improving his property, Mickelsson buys all the necessary tools and materials on credit; the alimony he pays exceeds his entire income. Bills and demands pile up, but by now he has stopped opening his mail. Meanwhile, Mickelsson begins affairs with Jessica Stark, a widowed sociology professor, and Donnie Matthews, a teenage prostitute; both affairs go haywire.

Mickelsson's decline is accompanied by his gradual apprehension of the farmhouse's ghosts. At first merely intuited presences, then flickers, shadows, voices, they finally appear, two-thirds of the way through the novel, re-enacting events that preceded their violent deaths. Manifestations become more frequent as Mickelsson slides further downhill. Here, as elsewhere, Gardner keeps the reader guessing. Given Mickelsson's mental state, it would be reasonable to regard the ghosts as hallucinations; the previous occupant saw nothing in fourteen years — but there are countervailing indications that he is a "sensitive". Concurrently, sinister developments are taking place on the periphery: rumours of witchcraft and UFOs, mysterious trucks — unmarked, without lights — on the mountain roads after dark, gruesome murders in which a shadowy, perhaps non-existent, sect of Mormon fanatics may be implicated.

Canady, calls on Mike Dime in his conventional office, and the big weakness is that Nancy Canady drops out of the thing completely and doesn't come back till the plot's tied up. Of course, that's only my opinion. "So you read the beginning and the end. What comes in the mid-section?" "The usual Chandler stuff. Corrupt police, a clinic run by an evil shrink, lawyers leading double lives, a beautiful dame who's crazy — I mean crazy enough to kiss Mike Dime, nothing more. Not in Chandler country."

"Sounds pretty good to me. What's the beef? Is the sense of location defective, or what?" "The sense of location, as you put it, is well researched. But nothing you wouldn't get from an old *Frommer's Guide to Philadelphia and Atlantic City*."

"You're saying the local colour comes out of a guide-book?" "You're kidding. If a lawyer was sitting in his could jump all over me for that. All I'm saying is, when Fantoni wants a rest from Philly, he moves the plot to Atlantic City, just like Arthur Frommer. See?"

"Mm," said the voice. You don't have to spell it out for a *Times* man. "But then all complaints. I must remind you that when the *TLS* reviewed Fantoni's first Dime novel — (I slipped a loud ho-ho-in there, just for encouragement) — we said that Fantoni's Chandler was often brighter and better disciplined than the original. What we now want to know is, has he kept up that standard?"

"Sure he has, but who wants discipline from a Chandler novel? What I want is sentimental woodiness and corrosive disgust — a sense of injury that the world is bad, but a compensating delight in the language can't reproduce that with just a register. It's as sweetly uncomplicated as a drink in his last first."

elephant's intestines. Chandler's was than that."

It was quite a speech. Maybe he should write it into the Constitution that sort of thing?"

"I admit it has its moments. I like writer who likes jazz to much to resist calling the butler. To some of the one-liners I like. 'I guessed, was anything between six and forty-seven — stuff like that, garage-hand called Ernie Kafka made a change. But Fantoni has to change his act. You don't begin a chapter with 'Something about the man had me feel uneasy. You're supposed to feel uneasy about everything in Chandler novel. And the better he does the dénouement sticks.'"

"All dénouements stick." "Yeah, but this one sticks to the end of 'I'm not sure why I've told you this. . .'"

He said "Mm" again, and then silence. My throat was parched, and the Buddy Rich Orchestra was going up in my stomach. It was that moment when Senator Joe McCarthy had been handed a cup of coffee and he had to have it for him.

"It seems to me," the voice began, "that we have a real problem here. The success of our hands here. I mean nothing you can say that will be quoted on the paperback back. There's nothing wrong in the *Literary Supplement's* being wrong with success, you know."

I coughed politely. "Fantoni has done it again."

"Is that all?"

"Very well. One more question. Would you tell the book a parody? Or are we dealing with a parody of a parody?"

That's when I hung up on him. I was tired. You don't ask a literary investigator without a drink in his last first.

PETER BROWN

Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity
347pp. Faber. £10.50.
0 571 11686 8

Ten years ago Peter Brown brought together in his *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* a series of articles published during the 1960s, by-products of or preludes to his splendid biography, *Augustine of Hippo*, published in 1967. The present collection contains work of the following decade, the period of gestation of his Jackson Lectures, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, 1978, and the Haskell Lectures, *The Cult of the Saints: its rise and function in Latin Christianity*, 1981. These essays are preparatory, but only in the broadest sense. No one at all acquainted with Professor Brown's work will expect merely preliminary explorations to establish conclusions to be built into the argument of the books. Rather, they reveal new preoccupations emerging in studies on a variety of subjects, ranging from the Emperor Julian the Apostate to the withering of trial by ordeal in medieval Europe. The book's coherence lies in its convergence on a single cluster of themes, aptly designated by its title.

In one way or another, whether Brown is writing about the historiography of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages and the great figures from Gibbon to Pirenne, or about its visual arts or about its secular or religious institutions, ceremonial and practices, what he is concerned with is the shifting locus of the holy in those centuries. Beginning with the now famous essay on "The rise and function of the holy man in Late Antiquity", 1971 (reprinted here), this is the theme at the core both of the two books and their companion pieces in the present volume.

Much of Brown's writing is in the form of an implicit dialogue with those historians whose work has come to rise like mountain masses between modern scholars and the vistas before them: Rostovtzeff in the case of the transformations which led from the classical world to that of Late Antiquity, Pirenne in that of the passage from Antiquity to the medieval West; and, inevitably, the shadow of Gibbon hovers behind both. "Prone for the Middle Ages; Rostovtzeff for the ancient world: each in his own way was a Great European bourgeois, studying with deep commitment the late of civilizations based on cities." The essay on "The holy man" marks the decisive break with that "monotonous perspective" labelled by modern scholars which makes us see "popular religion" in terms of an "intrusion into the upper classes of the Roman world [of] ideas whose original place was among the primitive masses of the Near East."

Late Antique attitudes cannot be caught in a net woven of the slender, unrel categories left us by eighteenth-century rationalism or European romanticism. "Categories such as 'superstition', 'culture of nerve' or 'flight from reason', Rostovtzeff had diagnosed the failure of classical civilization in terms of a "democratization of classical culture", generalizing the view held by men as diverse as David Hume and Cardinal Newman that the religion of the multitude is corrupt and tends to degeneracy and to superstition. Fundamental to Brown's mapping of the cultural and religious changes of Late Antiquity is the rejection of any model which would represent them in terms of the corruption of an elite — pagan or Christian — by alien modes of thought, whether near-Eastern, barbarian or "popular". Any such approach would fail to touch the real problem we should seek to understand: what it is like for a great traditional society to pass over a watershed."

The work of a generation of social anthropologists has taught us the impossibility of that kind of dissociation of religion from a society's "cultural system". Late Antiquity could treat the invisible world with a cool sobriety just because it was the which taken for granted as was the visible. Not boundless credulity but

Power from on high

R. A. Markus

critical discrimination is the chief characteristic of its attitude to manifestations of the supernatural. The invisible line which fixes the gulf between the saint and the sorcerer belongs to the stuff of Late Antique religion. It was a nice discrimination, which had to be carried out afresh in every anomalous or marginal situation. Some of Brown's finest pages trace the images in which pagans or Christians made sense of the anomalous, of the irreconcilable tensions brought into this world by demonic forces from the presence and protection from demonic intrusion and possession offered men a device for mapping the "disruptions and tensions around them". The Holy Man was "one of those many surprising devices by which men in a vigorous and sophisticated society set about the delicate business of living", and after his death his physical remains made him present to his friends and clients on earth and his power felt among his enemies. For Late Antique men it was the locus, not the reality, of divine power and revelation that needed to be established. The tracing of the shifts in this localization is Brown's chief preoccupation, running through these essays as it does through his books of the 1970s.

The debate about the supernatural, in his view, was a "muffled debate on the exercise of different forms of power in small groups". Religious change was promoted by and at the same time contributed to transformations in the distribution of power in society. Divine power on earth was wielded, increasingly, by individuals singled out among the generality of men and accredited by their followers with a permanent relationship with the source of their authority. A society which had found access to the supernatural through the ordered rhythms of permanent institutions in an easygoing and widely diffused familiarity with the divine thus came to be replaced by one in which such contact was granted through individuals with privileged access to it, singled out as intermediaries. Some of the most vital relationships of Late Roman times came to define new styles of relationship to the divine: relationships such as those between powerful patrons and their clients, between a beloved teacher and his disciples, or the intimacy of friendship. Drastic as was the shift from a *civitas communis* to a society in which the "new heroes and leaders of the Christian church came to stand between heaven and an earth emptied of the gods", it was, none the less, one which came about through a continuous adjustment in pressures rather than through the breakdown of the old religion and of the social relationships and the culture that had sustained it.

This view is most fully explored in the Jackson and the Haskell Lectures; but the essays in the present book are all, in some way, concerned with the same transformations. Late Antiquity witnessed beyond question one of those primary shifts in consciousness about which Norman Baynes once remarked that "the more significant a

movement is the less adequately can we as students of history explain it". In all his work Brown seeks to catch the delicate threads which link men's inner experiences to the society around them and to elucidate the nexus which exists between changing structures of social relations and the symbols and rituals in which individuals and groups articulate their shared experience. He is conscious of his debt to the British tradition of social anthropology, especially in the work of Mary Douglas, which has brought about "a breakthrough in the 'dualism' that is, the seeming hiatus between the structures of a society as grasped most obviously in its institutions, and its thought-systems of the same society"; he is equally conscious of his "ever-renewed debt to the respect for the concrete cunning of institutions and law that was first implanted in me by the Oxford school of medieval history". But these two sources and the enormous range of his learning do not entirely account for his work's peculiar stamp.

That is best revealed, among these essays, by the study "Gibbon's views on culture and society in the fifth and sixth centuries". Characteristically, it is Gibbon's account of his journey from Geneva to Rome that provides Brown's springboard. In Gibbon's visual sensitivity to the unique qualities of Late Roman culture Brown detects an awareness of which

nothing . . . survives into the pages of *Decline and Fall*. Thus, much of what we value as central to our access to the cultural and social life of Late Antiquity was appreciated by Gibbon, and yet it was relegated as irrelevant to the theme of *Decline and Fall*. It may well be that it is in those aspects which make Gibbon appear most alien to the sympathies of modern scholars that he has remained most relevant . . .

A theory of the relation between ideas and society lies behind not only Gibbon's dismissal of so much that has come to interest us, but also behind Brown's marvellously perceptive critique of that dismissal. Gibbon, one of the last of Brown's "late classical men", is — neither for the first nor the last time — the silent partner in a dialogue not just about the history of Late Antiquity, but about the study of history as such. In his inaugural lecture delivered at Royal Holloway College and reprinted at the start of the present collection under the title "Learning and imagination", Brown again refers to Gibbon as "a man of awesome learning and unbending criteria as to what it was worth his while to understand in the past". His firm but sensitive delineation of what Gibbon's criteria led him to exclude from *Decline and Fall* is counterbalanced by a generous appreciation of the intellectual and imaginative resources Gibbon mobilized in his work. He had "drawn on the full range of the culture of his age in order to understand the great themes he had proposed himself to treat". Ten years ago, in the introduction to his *Religion and*

Society, Brown had insisted that the building up of a "historical culture" is not a work of instant transplants between historical and other disciplines, such as psychoanalysis, social anthropology or social theory, but a slow accumulation of insights learned from their exponents, digesting "new ways of seeing the world", "opening oneself to the present".

If Gibbon's limitations as a historian are those which derive from assumptions embedded in the culture of the later eighteenth century, his greatness is rooted in the power of his imagination. Brown refers to us, typically, to a footnote. Gibbon appended to his mention of circumscriptions in sixth-century Constantinople: "Read and feel the twenty-second book of the *Iliad*," Gibbon advised, "a living picture of the manners, passions and the whole form and spirit of the chariot-race." Read and feel: Brown dwells on the phrase, betraying, like many others, the driving forces in his own work in the qualities he singles out for admiration in the work of other scholars. The unique cast of the imagination in everything Brown has written appears on page after page of these essays. Take as an example, chosen almost at random, "The last pagan emperor": the reader is invited, at the outset, to look at Julian through the eyes of the Syrian Christian Ephraim, who went out to mock the corpse of "the unclean one" as it lay outside the walls of Nesibin, with the broken remnants of the Roman army trailing past; the juxtaposition of the two men, "folded in a single party", allows Brown to split asunder the narrow moulds which prevent modern historians from understanding fourth-century pagans. We are jolted, for a moment, into seeing the pagan Julian whom Ephraim the Christian went out to see. The artistry with which Brown seizes an incident, a phrase, a fleeting image, forces his reader to look at the world of which it has become a luminous fragment, and to see it in an oblique light which throws unaccustomed contours into sharp relief.

In *Religion and Society* Brown spoke of the "patina of the obvious" as the "first and last enemy of the historian". His own work is one of the finest examples in our generation of success in rescuing an age — Late Antiquity — from the tyranny of stereotypes. The opening essay in the new collection is his most explicit plea on behalf of the imagination: "in the middle of an exacting history course", he told his students in his inaugural lecture, "it takes a high degree of moral courage to resist one's own conscience: to take time off; to let the imagination run; to give serious attention to books that widen our sympathies, that train us to imagine with greater precision what it is like to be human in situations very different from our own." This is a plea for something more than a willing suspension of disbelief; it is a plea for a discipline of the imagination: a readiness

to ask ourselves whether the imaginative models that we bring to the study of history are sufficiently precise and differentiated, whether they embrace enough of what we sense to be what it is to be human, to enable us to understand and to communicate to others the sheer challenge of the past.

This is no formula or programme — how could it be? — for a historical methodology. Rather, it is a reminder of a dimension of historical understanding neglect of which leads to the desiccated familiarity to which so much of our teaching, writing, and — dare one add — examining the subjects (at every level of secondary and higher education) undertake the study of the past. Almost without exception the essays gathered here are attempts — whatever reservations may be entertained on the relative success of one or another — to meet this permanent challenge of the past to the imagination. The result is not only an enhancement of our understanding of Late Antiquity: it is also an enhancement of the possibilities of historical study.

Our daughter is concerned, our son Delighted by this sudden brush With butterflies that one by one Tip outwards from their startled bush

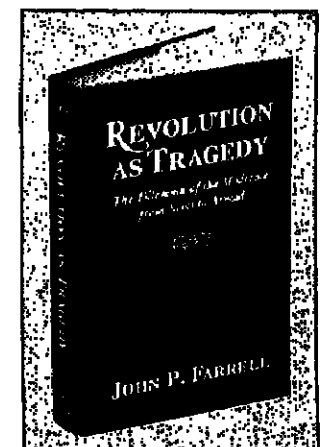
And clutter our intended stay So thick upon the air we must Retreat the far of mid-July And paddle palms to readjust

What's panic but a strict surprise? That blundered wedding picture where We duck as thin confetti flies And snows across the camera

John Levett

Cornell

In times when a nation's consciousness is dominated by radical action and conservatism the reaction, the political moderate risks becoming a cultural dweller. Many writers in 19th-century England sought to justify their ambivalence toward revolution, to themselves and to their society, through their literary works. In *Revolution as Tragedy*, John P. Farrell examines the ways in which four major British writers — Scott, Byron, Carlyle, and Arnold — conceived of and dramatized revolution as tragic action.



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"This book suggests a basic reconsideration of the categories common to 19th-century literature." —*Library Journal*

"A splendid piece of work. Farrell's ideas on Scott, Byron, Carlyle, and Arnold are always relevant and fascinating, and his challenging readings of their work deserve close attention. . . . A forceful, extremely well-written, exciting, and significant contribution to the intellectual and literary history of the 19th century." —*John Hanning, State University of New York, Binghamton*

Revolution as Tragedy

The Elements of the Moderate from Scott to Arnold
By JOHN P. FARRELL

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS
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commentary

Illusions of freedom

Andrew Motion

Howard Hodgkin
Indian Leaves
Tate GalleryIndian Leaves
With a portrait of the artist by Bruce Chatwin
Petersburg Press. £10.00.
0 902825 14 3

"In a Le Corbusier house in the middle of a Douranier Rousseau garden, surrounded by a high wire fence, in the middle of Ahmedabad" live the Sarabhai family. They are mill-owners, and over the years have combined their business interests with patronage of the arts. Several well-known artists have been entertained by them, and provided with facilities to work – on the condition that one half of the finished products remain in the family's collection. In 1978 Howard Hodgkin was their guest and, worried by the Sarabhai rule, he decided to do two versions of every image. "Soon I realized the two images were becoming one. In the end when the time came to divide the work I didn't split the pairs. I gave them some, and I kept some."

Hodgkin had been to India many times before, but the circumstances at Ahmedabad were unlike any he had previously encountered. He asked chemists at the Sarabhai factory to provide him with textile dyes which corresponded to various paints he named, and arranged that four or six pieces of unsized, hand-laid paper – also from the factory – should be brought to him twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. They were delivered wet, and in the one-and-a-half to two hours before they dried he worked on them very quickly, using brushes and sponges. Fifteen of the pairs he completed have now been published with a short memoir of Hodgkin by his friend Bruce Chatwin, and fourteen form a small but engrossing exhibition at the Tate as part of the series which has already included *Six Indian Painters*.

Hodgkin has made no secret of his methods of composition, but he is protectively reticent about the end results. "I have always thought of them as the leaves of a book – that they're all one work", he says, referring to them also as "a sampler of all the different kinds of languages I use in my paintings". Even without this encouragement, it would be hard to avoid conferring some sort of narrative on the images – whatever their actual order of composition.

The first pair, "Window", looks out at a landscape which is all but overpowered by a lowering orange sky, and the view is so darkly bordered with thick aquagales, and so nearly obscured by green blobs, that it creates a sense of imprisonment rather than a prospect. The two paintings suggest that what follows can only be recollected or invented – and not actually perceived in his confinement and the subsequent images themselves confirm this. Among them, a palm, architectural shapes, a mango, a snake, a lotus, a tree, a vehicular, seem to be simultaneously liberated into a space and confined by the borders which surround them. Their palpable existence is challenged by the context in which they appear. This effect is paralleled by the condition of the forms: in almost every case, objects can be recognized, but their identities are a prey to abstraction. The massive, Palmer-like, heavy-lidded "Tree" is an exception, proving the rule: it is the essence of tree. "Shake" is more typical: a quick, two half-circles and dashes and blotches, with its nature almost, masked by the lines which

To celebrate the raising of the Mary Rose the British Library is showing, until December 31, a small exhibition of manuscript documents and maps relating to the ship, including letters about its sea-trials, inventories, wages-lists and an account by the King's gunner.

pattern its skin. One consequence of this debate between different methods of representation – as with the debate between different senses of space – is an apprehension of Hodgkin's imaginative excitement, but also of evanescence and threat. In one or two cases this threat becomes paramount. "Hot Night", for instance, is in effect a set of thick spidery borders – green, red, darker green – converging on a large dark blue blot which is menacingly overflowing its allotted space. The image is so sad and irrepressibly desperate that it is not easy to believe that the two final pairs in the exhibition – "Indian Train" and "Lotus" – represent a chance of movement and a notion of resolution which can be achieved absolutely or for long.

Michael Compton, in his essay written to accompany the paintings, rightly qualifies their narrative cohesion by emphasizing that they can be "combined and recombined" to form a variety of sequences. But the paradoxes of form and space remain central, however one reads the story, and these are inseparable from the more purely technical considerations to which the essay directs most of its attention. To a great extent, but never in a narrowly modernist sense, these paintings are about themselves and the processes of their creation. During and even after the time that Hodgkin was working, the dyes operated with a life of their own in the coarse-grained wet paper. Almost the strongest impression the paintings give – even when describing states of confinement – is one of freedom. But we are never allowed to forget that this is subject to chance and may well be an illusion. Hodgkin has created the freedom of *Indian Leaves* partly by a series of consciously willed acts, and partly by inspired submission to his circumstances.

Labyrinths of film-making

Richard Combs

Hammett
Lumière Cinema

Hammett – the title is as direct and no-nonsense as its subject, and might suggest a film that equally knows its business, and will pursue it with a single-minded vigour. But *Hammett*, the film, is a different kettle of fish from the hard-boiled literary tradition from which it stems, which it is about, but which is by no means the limit of its interests (or its references). It is, actually, something of a labyrinth, where many subjects seem to be chasing each other and which might be negotiated by following more than one thread.

There might even be more than one film lost in this maze. On the strength of his thriller *The American Friend*, the German director Wim Wenders was invited by Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope Studio to adapt the novel *Hammett* by Joe Gores (like *Dashiell Hammett*, an ex-detective who had turned to detective fiction). Not really biography, Gores's book had involved the real-life Hammett in a Hammett-like adventure, and Wenders's intention was even more to show the personality of Hammett this writer, intermingling did not fit with the studio's plans for a classic detective yarn, and in what became a very protracted, on-off venture, the production went through many writers and innumerable scripts, before another thriller writer, Ross Thomas, came up with an ending that satisfied both Wenders and Coppola. But this also necessitated other revisions throughout the film and the reshooting of much of it.

One thread that might be traced through the result concerns literary history: the evolution of the hard-boiled school. We see a lot of Hammett (Frederic Forrester) at the typewriter,

Lout into gentleman

Stanley Wells

SHAKESPEARE

The Taming of the Shrew
Royal Shakespeare Theatre

So many nice things happen before the house lights go down that it is worth arriving early for this production. A fire burns in a brazier, a band practices jolly Elizabethan pieces, a boy and a woman play at conkers, rustics wearing paper crowns sit round a table, chat and dance: it looks as if we're to have a pleasantly naturalistic, domestic, wholly Elizabethan evening. The

Induction begins, Sly is bundled off upstage, the Lord enters, and we adjust to the realization that we are in his house, not a tavern. Players arrive picturesquely, singing carols: the Christmas mood is sustained.

But as the entertainment for Sly is about to begin, a trap beneath the improvised divan on which he and his page-boy wife are lying suddenly gives way, precipitating them out of sight, and a tiresome joking afflics the production. Characterization lapses into caricature; Lucentio – well played by Mark Rylance – is not merely a somewhat priggish student, he also wears boater and blazer (though the style is predominantly sixteenth-century). Tranio (John Bowe) as

Lucentio struts and preens, glitters in open-necked golden doublet and tights, a beruffled dagger, his disguise, reveals himself in scuffed and leopard-skin tights with a codpiece. There are set-pieces: Gremio boasts of his possession of expensive bits of bric-a-brac rolled back the back of the stage like the lotus and oxen fall – but only just – with scrolls demonstrating Lucentio's such well tried provokers of mirth as one-man band and bicycle-made-for-four. A lot of the business is of the kind that seems to require applause rather than laughter: Petruccio falls flat on his back into a pond and emerges bedraggled; so too, a little later, does Kate; the audience claps, but what is admiring is gallantry, acrobatics perhaps, but not acting.

It is all done with great accomplishment, but too often breaks both mood and rhythm. The stylization might be more acceptable if it were seen as a way of marking off the play within the play from the enveloping action, but the Sly episodes are clumsily handled. There are borrowings from the source-play *The Taming of a Shrew*, legitimate enough, but they do not justify themselves theatrically. Once the shrew play has begun, we have a sense of it as a play performed for Sly, he dashes on and off from time to time to little effect; and though he joins in the closing festivities, the epilogue from *A Shrew* is not given.

Though the judicious may guess that the have cause for pleasure, in some of the best lines get the unforgotten laughs – Lucentio's "Spill the hole, man, and tunc again", or Biondello's "I knew a wench named in an afternoon as she went to a garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit's so may you." Peter Postlethwaite does very well by Gremio's account of the journey if he showed a little more apt of realizing what an excellent aria it is. John Carlisle triumphs with suave elegance, effortless Gremio, a masterpiece of understatement; David Waller is a touchingly gentle affectionate Baptista, bewildered by what goes on around him, cheerfully befuddled in the last scene. The pictures are often delightful, and the music is of the delectable kind – plentiful, as is the current fashion – never out of its welcome.

Which leaves us with Katharine and Petruccio (or "Petroccio", as they insist on calling him). Alan Armstrong plays the hero not as a gentleman pretending to be a lout but as a lout who has just a chance of developing into a gentleman. There is a resemblance, possibly intentional, to Sly. His first wooing scene, with Kate, provokes an uncertain response: may discern that through their agonies each other's jokes they are coming towards a basis of understanding, the frighteningly brutal to his servants, makes little attempt to show a different side of himself to the audience; in his account of his wooing technique, illustrated by his carrying a live bird in his wrist; its grave beauty awes the house into silence.

As Kate, Sinead Cusack matches him in power. Initially she is strident, raucous, but gradually her beauty begins to show, and she starts to blush to Petruccio while also managing to suggest that she tolerates his humiliations because some process of understanding is going on within herself. Its nature is revealed most impressively in her long speech in the historical lectures, but works up into roaring approval for the sexual and lavatory jokes and gags. When invited to participate in a song describing the sack of the Summer Palace, at Peking, accompanied by a platoon of guards, she is quite delighted as though they joined in as "Come, Kate, we'll be bed". Alan Armstrong's production achieves subtlety in its last moments.

commentary

Northerners in a southern country

Stoddard Martin

HECTOR BERLIOZ

Les Troyens
Staatsoper, Hamburg

By consistently wrestling romantic opera out of conventional clichés, Götz Friedrich has earned a following in Germany which attends his premieres specifically to boo. This was present in his new *Les Troyens*. Nor was it only a coterie which made known its dismay on this occasion. A leading Berlioz scholar declined to meet Friedrich at a reception after the

performance. "I hated it!" he exclaimed. "His hands must be bloody from those appalling cuts!" Ubiquitous was the charge Charles Osborne makes in his just-published *World Theatre of Wagner*: "Götz Friedrich believes in producers and their ideas rather than composers and their music."

Contemporary expectations of *Les Troyens* are coloured by Colin Davis's reading. In his preface to Osborne's book Davis describes himself as a "dreamer" and Friedrich as a "Marxist". Friedrich sees himself in more general terms as a thinker with dialectical and Brechtian impulses. Where Davis's reading of *Les Troyens* was "beautiful", Friedrich's is "puritanical". For Friedrich a crucial

moment is when Didon curses Enée as a "monstre de pitié". This, and Cassandra's unrelieved terror, form a psychological starting-point for his dark-hued, jagged presentation. To say that Friedrich is ignoring the composer's intentions in this is itself to ignore the exceedingly pessimistic nature of Berlioz's libretto.

Friedrich's production depends on close critical reading of that libretto. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the sequence which earned the loudest boos. Having been lulled for hours by French assonance, the audience was shocked to hear alliterative *Plauddeutsch* being sung by the two sentinels. The trick may have been in questionable taste, but it was far from

meaningless. The sentinels are the only vulgar voices in the opera. In the manner of Shakespeare's "low" characters, they go on about drinking and chasing Carthaginians girls. They are northern foreigners on holiday in a sunny country. What more appropriate way could there be to underline the fact than to have them sing in a foreign (if in this case teasingly native) tongue?

The moment interrupts the flow of the drama, but to blame this on Friedrich alone is unjust. Berlioz called for comedy to intrude here. Moreover, with his eye on Gluck as well as Shakespeare, he was hardly writing an opera of the dramatic focus of, say, its immediate contemporary, *Tristan*. Wagner's theatrical genius was such that he could insert a comic duet – Mime and Alberich in Act II of *Siegfried*, for instance – without arresting forward momentum. Berlioz never achieved that sort of architectural mastery. *Les Troyens* proceeds, particularly in the Carthage section, in set-pieces. Overall it is one of the most awkwardly formed operas of its period.

The first two acts, which tell Cassandra's story, are an hour shorter than the last three, which tell Didon's. Breaking between each act is silly; they are too short. Breaking after the second and fourth acts might lend a Wagnerian symmetry to the whole, but it would destroy the unity of Didon's tale. Friedrich places his single interval between the Troy and Carthage sections, which is the only sensible solution. But the length of the latter, combined in this case with the inexplicably dull tempo of conductor Sylvain Cambiaval after the Royal Hunt, contributes to a gradual descent of tedium.

Ekkehard Gröbler's set centres on a huge battlement in two detachable segments for Troy and a coliseum in four detachable segments for Carthage. From scene to scene these are shifted by stagehands in Trojan or Carthaginian garb. A great wooden horse crowned with actual horses' skulls is wheeled in between the segments at the end of the Troy section. Into this, rather than onto Mt Ida, Cassandra leads her women for their immolation. Horse, entrance, and immolation are echoed in Didon's pyre in the finale.

The Cassandra of Friedrich's wife, Karan Armstrong, benefits from, as well as contributing to, the superior coherence and drive of the Troy section. Armstrong's voice is clear, her low notes unusually firm, and her hyperactive movement apt. Helped by the handsome and warm-voiced young Mikael Melbye as Cherebe, she makes a convincing lover as well as prophetess. Her most breathtaking moment comes when she crosses the stage carrying Melbye's body and singing "Tous ne périront pas" at the same time.

The Didon of Hanna Schwarz is not as convincing. This may be in part due to veteran Guy Chauvet's uninspiring Enée. Schwarz sounds regal, but she only looks capable of love with her women: Anna, sung in sure mezzo by Mariana Lipovsek, and a Numidian, sung in a husky alto by Nina Thomas. Schwarz's first sequence, James is more the vain rage of a narcissist than the despair of a genuine lover.

It is hard to imagine a more looking more glamorous than, yet, Ms Schwarz as she goes to her death in a low-necked black negligé. The progress of her costumes to this point, initial white and gold mirrors in reverse, the progress of Ms Armstrong's to white from initial black and blood-red. Here, as elsewhere Gröbler's designs are expressive. The mixing of Crusader armour, Confederate greatcoats, and even Gallipoli mud with classical uniforms is an effective means of emphasizing Friedrich's overarching view of *Les Troyens* as a timeless parable of the bringing of the beautiful of a war-culture into a naive utopia.

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The horses of San Marco being led into exile in 1942, an illustration from A Venetian Bestiary by Jan Morris (128pp. Thames and Hudson. £8.95. 0 500 23354 3).

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Ronald Hayman

ALAN AYCKBOURN

Way Upstream
Lyttelton Theatre

In August 1981 patrons of Alan Ayckbourn's theatre in Scarborough already knew that his new play was going to open on October 2, and the actors had been given a date for the first day of rehearsal, but the play had not yet been written. It did not even have a title. Previously this method of working had always yielded acceptable results, even when he set himself the most taxing technical problems. In *Way Upstream* the technical problems were formidable but not insoluble. He had a full-sized cabin cruiser built with a bottom, so that it would appear to be floating, and, not content for it to be

static, he arranged for it to move, even in the small Scarborough theatre-in-the-round, where a tank was built so that the whole acting area could be flooded. Because of engineering problems, the preview had to be cancelled, and the actors had to open, after an interrupted technical rehearsal and a single dress rehearsal, to a first-night audience that included reviewers from national dailies. At the Lyttelton, the engineering problems took longer to overcome, and the first night had to be postponed.

Clearly, Ayckbourn would not have won as much as he has on the world's theatrical gaming tables if he had not been prepared to take big risks, but the risks of *Way Upstream* are not merely technical, and in the same way that a joke can seem very funny in the pub and very unfunny at a dinner party, a play can delight the Scarborough audience and, without seeming totally unfunny at the National Theatre, can

seem wholly inadequate. To me *Way Upstream* seems like a first draft. If Ayckbourn had given himself the leisure to rewrite it three times, he would either have ended up with something brilliant or have scrapped it.

As it is, we have a play which contains some good ideas, some extremely funny dialogue, some shrewd observation, and some embarrassingly unbelievable moments in which characters are hijacked into going off-course for the sake of allegory. The boat is intended to represent the ship of state. The inaction induced by *laissez-faire* liberalism gives people no defence against a power-hungry, undemocratic leader, and when democracy reasserts itself, it may be that a destructive madman will have engaged the sympathies of the majority. But Ayckbourn succeeds neither in making the meaning emerge clearly nor in making his characters consistently credible, although he does make them consistently watchable. We lose faith in the play even if we retain our interest in what's happening.

Some of the flaws in writing and production are easier to forgive than others. There is no need for the fight to be so unconvincing, and neither lighting nor sound effects are as good as they were in Scarborough. One of the production's charms there lay in the evocation of river life by means of delicate plopping noises while the boat's movement under bridges was suggested by means of lighting changes and echo effects. Generally the acting is better in London, though there is no adequate replacement for the extremely subtle performance by Laynia Bertram. Susan Fleetwood, in her bushy red hennaed wig, is delightfully raucous as the sex-starved suburban housewife, while, as the self-important, power-hungry husband who is scared of her and dictatorial with everyone else, Tony Haygarth turns in an admirably judged performance. His feeble partner, Alistair, is almost impossible to play, for the plot requires him to remain passive and gently encouraging when his wife starts to walk the plank, but Jim Norton, as the rebellious, scolding, throughout most of the play, is

James Laurens and Nina Thomas are also victims of unreasonable demands. In order to make a statement about evil, Ayckbourn introduces two characters who seem likeable and turn out to be as maliciously malignant as Iago. In *Way Upstream*, the first sequence, James is more the vain rage of a narcissist than the despair of a genuine lover.

It is hard to imagine a more looking more glamorous than, yet, Ms Schwarz as she goes to her death in a low-necked black negligé. The progress of her costumes to this point, initial white and gold mirrors in reverse, the progress of Ms Armstrong's to white from initial black and blood-red. Here, as elsewhere Gröbler's designs are expressive. The mixing of Crusader armour, Confederate greatcoats, and even Gallipoli mud with classical uniforms is an effective means of emphasizing Friedrich's overarching view of *Les Troyens* as a timeless parable of the bringing of the beautiful of a war-culture into a naive utopia.

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Tickling a rhinoceros

Alethea Hayter

PETER NICHOLS

Poppy
Barbican Theatre

As in *Ariadne auf Naxos* a tragic opera and a harlequinade have to compete simultaneously for the audience's attention, so in Peter Nichols's *Poppy* two different kinds of performance struggle to get across at the same time. One of them is given by, as it were, an earnest young lecturer in "Peace Studies" who has been told to do a series on the Opium Wars, and has mugged up some facts and statistics rather selectively and without really understanding the background or grasping that the Lytton Strachey approach is now *démodé*. Every now and then he gets an opportunity to hurl some "gobs of his thesis at the audience," in the form of lecturettes from the mouth of one of the characters in the pieces. But his tragic opera had no real chance against the harlequinade, the rollicking song and dance, the sumptuous costumes and elegant décor, of the affectionately mocked pantomime – complete with female hero and male dame – which is the other competitor for the audience's attention.

Peter Nichols has a theory, explained in a programme note and put into the mouth of Queen Victoria in the play itself, that the British pantomime is one of the best clues to the real truth about Victorian Britain. It certainly did not have this effect on the audience when I was there. The attention noticeably slackened during the historical lectures, but works up into roaring approval for the sexual and lavatory jokes and gags. When invited to participate in a song describing the sack of the Summer Palace, at Peking, accompanied by a platoon of guards, she is quite delighted as though they joined in as "Come, Kate, we'll be bed". Alan Armstrong's production achieves subtlety in its last moments.

demstrate that the British public, now as then, doesn't want to know, the result is brilliantly successful. It seems probable, however, that Peter Nichols had in mind something altogether more grim and grotesque, a *dance macabre* of ugly Cruikshank masks and East India Company bellies bloated with greed, at which no one could have costily chuckled.

If so, his intention is frustrated by the glitteringly inventive and ingenious production by Terry Hands, by Monty Norman's happy tunes, equally at home when pastiching Gilbert and Sullivan or Salvation Army hymns, and by Farrah's graceful designs, which make even the opium reverie scene look sweetly pretty with its giant poppies – and floating figures. Palmerston is turned into a ventriloquist's dummy, the Chinese army into a nimble dragon-headed caterpillar, and even decapitated human heads are laughingly used as Aunt Sally. The Royal Shakespeare Company's spirited and well-directed performance allows almost no time for any intrusion by sombre realities, though Julia Hills does succeed in conveying the deterioration from skittish schoolmistress to lethargic laudanum-addict, and Stephen Moore achieves a moment of authentic pathos in his Farewell to his Arab Steed, a threnody over his delightful and touching blue pantomime horse, about to be shot for the pot during the Canton siege.

The earnest young lecturer who is trying to get you to listen through all this brilliant fun has, however, got a real point. The Opium Wars were indefensible, as Gladstone, Shaftesbury, the Quakers and many others said at the time; but this pantomime is not an effective way to attack them. It is the opposite of breaking a butterfly on a wheel: tickling a rhinoceros, perhaps. However if you can forget what it is, actually supposed to be about, you will find this jolly romp quite suitable – give the jolly romp a go. They were at the Barbican, saying: "This life by the" – the intention is to

backwards and forwards through our poetry. I know I would give all of *The Village and the Deserted Village*, structure or no, for

No fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,

for
Off have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dew away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn
and for
One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill.
But those aren't the lines of the
quotation dictionary in Gray.

No, farmers don't fit into poetry as a vision. There's a farmer down the road. The cat of his house and sheds and stackyard kits too often. He is a fat farmer, he doesn't chase, bend, catch and then down the superfluity of escaping kittens, which is at least sanctioned by custom. When he has a chance he runs over them. He has a tractor. It's like sport, he says. Taking a chance he has occasionally killed his huffers too young. The chance hasn't always paid - three men holding the heifer (which dies), two men pulling out the calf (which is born dead). Very well, he isn't a very bright farmer. But he isn't unique. In fiction he belongs to Zola and *La Terre*, in poetry he belongs to Crabbe. No wonder poetry of life and land and increase has stuck on the whole to the vision of golden wheat or the vision of shepherds caring for dams and lambs and shepherdesses.

The unpoetic
Poems do depend on the unpoetic. The poetic, in the sense of the decayed popular matter of a previous mode, gets in the way, though there are cunning poets who use it in a slightly disguised form. In the sense of what is proper to poems, it is good to find Novels, mystic and symbolist with a training in geology, insisting "Poetry is the genuine absolute reality. The more it is poetic, the more it is real." He said that the more personal and local and temporal and real a poem is, the nearer it comes to the heart of poetry.

Are we to believe that a mutation has occurred in the required dy essential nature of verse? That - for instance - flat, linear, untextured arrangement has properly taken over, that formal skills and manipulation, rhythmic, measured, musical, sensuous, visual, have by necessity been superseded? Is all previous poetry now useless? Not unless man has mutated into a new species, which he hasn't: all we have done is to have advanced our techniques, to have started on a readjustment of our societies, to have advanced our self-investigation, to have lessened some of our fears (if we have also increased other fears and added new ones). But we are still the same kind, individually advancing from early consciousness to blossoming and maturity, and then retarding to death. Therefore poetry, to which not many of us respond, must still maintain its bodily and mental relationships; the most private of our arts, for poet or reader, the necessary secret possession of select individuals. It isn't choral, it isn't communal; it has nothing to do with poetry societies or with the busybodies of art (as we know them) appointed by the state; it is resistant - if underneath of our sight of journalists and Americans and teachers - of literature - to vulgarization. Only its cards, its same cards, are slightly reshuffled, as they have been, with one effect, and another, for the last two or three millennia.

Nothing that may not have occurred before, no pressure, no law, no penalty, no literary jackboot, no guru, in beads, talking of violence and sin, no loony, compels us to tie to ourselves or others, or to be ridiculous. But we have our epidemics of delusion.

A drivel
The uncommensurate thing in the criticism of poems is educated feeling - a readiness or willingness or eagerness to be moved, coupled with experience in language, or at any rate in words, as well as experience in how words have been selected and combined and projected by poets - poets of now and of the past.

New books of verse are reviewed in batches, as an editorial duty. But the

books worth commending will always be few and far between - in our language perhaps two or three in a year, or none for another two or three years. Lines ought to be quoted in the review, if it is not to be a meagre acceptance or dismissal. I've just watched a cheese-maker put his hand into a great stainless-steel vat of warm milk and feel the changing milk between his fingers and thumb. Knowledge of the substance. Out of the poetry vat a line, half a line, is generally enough to tell the experienced consumer if new verse is likely to reward him.

Edwin Arlington Robinson found a categorizing word for an article he had disliked. Someone or other, some well-placed nobody, had written "a drivel" about poems. A drivel is what the poetry-reviewers usually compose; not for the sake of the poetry but because the literary editor thinks he must now and again provide a space and a place for this ancient art, which hasn't the quality of spreading in extent of readers, at once, but only the quality of persisting, if it is good, in a long narrow strip of readership through time ahead.

Imagination as the power of combining impressions into new objects, as the creative power we have, can act well or wickedly, can create good products or beastly ones. Goethe talked of poetry regulating the imagination. But then poetry must have regulations (not immutable ones, of course) before it can regulate and put imagination to good use. Goethe continued that there is nothing more frightful than imagination without taste unregulated, that is to say; and to realize that, you have only to look round clearly enough at the poetry or painting or sculpture, etcetera, of your day, or any day.

"To replace the facile beauty of death by another beauty" - Mayakovsky. And there are poets, sometimes called by their friends "great minor poets" who slum-crawl, and walk on the greyer side of grey streets and look for children whose noses are running in the cold and dirt. They go home and declare, in poems, it is all a sell - all, everything; as if slums couldn't have their noses wiped. Detestable cynicism. Sullen superiority and defeatism, posing as modest and unselfish exhibition of the truth.

The stuffiness of some poetry, too familiar too fitted, too competent, no room between its objects d'art. Fragments are not to be despised, whether of poems or statues. The unfinished. The unfinished.

By Pasternak there is a poem prefacing poems which says the words should drop from us when they have ripened - drop, I suppose, into their place in the nature of poetry.

Let your words fall
Like the over-ripe sugar fruit, amber,
Abstemiously, plentiful,
Fall, fall, fall.

We are reproached by that poem. We allow poems to come too quickly. We pull the words off for our purpose, we break them off, before they have reached their sweetness.

But then there are poets all of whose words or poems would fill only a small book. Why didn't they write more? Where they always acting by their high vision of the poetic? Had they resolved not to write anything which would be short of that vision? Or have they destroyed so much?

Or were they powerless to write except now and then? Some of them are credited with more than they deserve probably, as if they had willed their own disability.

Cynicism poets
The poets who are not prolific, who write cautiously but seldom badly, miss both the failures and the triumphs. The triumphs come from those bustling prolific poets who don't give a damn if they are writing well or badly. A bad poet is one who always writes badly.

Success
When a poet "succeeds" and is widely talked of, it is entirely right to be sceptical of his poems, to look at them again carefully to see if he isn't after all re-working the familiar, and using part of the wide objects of the simple, but be kind to him, to yourself, and to those who may overbear you about his poems - be kind and resist.

your scepticism after his second or third book.

In England - but also in every country with a literature - literature is detested. Those who hate it most among ourselves are, in no particular order, university teachers, literary journalists, publishers, and official encouragers of art or reading. They are all of them public. Literature is private, in making and reading; and insolent. It is reviewed or on exhibition in various ways, it is thrown out to wither on rubbish heaps, where it roots and refuses to wither, insolently. In England it is made - and rejected or temporarily by-passed - because the English are inventive, plastic and restless: they always want something new, some new writer to talk about, some writer - some writers - to be silent about. In England being valued justly and securely takes a very long time. Even then there may be a revolution. The paradox is that literature does require hatred of literature.

Criticism makes the lugubrious mistake - knowingly and deliberately - of neglecting the mushrooms above the surface for detective excavations in the mycelium underneath. He very presumptuously (I am thinking of critical biography as well) critic joins the threads up where breaks occur, or reconstruct missing portions.

Yet nothing matters except the tint, the shape, the texture and the taste, the totality of each individual poem above the ground.

Ruskin is one of those critics whose writing never convinces me that they allowed works of art to stare at them and act on them. He read some of Christina Rossetti's poems in manuscript before any of them were published. He told Christina's brother that they were too full of "quaintness and other offences" to attract a publisher. He told him that "irregular measure", introduced "in its chief fullness by Coleridge", was "the calamity of modern poetry". The masters from Homer to Keats had written "without taking a single license or violating the common ear for metre".

"Your sister should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public likes. Then I shall put in her observation and passion and will become precious. But she must have the Form first." There she makes the impudence of wealth and egotism - and ignorance. You can hear the squeak of the quill pen.

In writing poems now, with our speed of obsolescence and disappearance, it is more than ever necessary to be sure of the durability of the properties and images they contain. A modern reader of Victor Hugo's "Booz endormi" written only 117 years ago - won't know the point of saying that water for a mill should run without mud, he never have seen a reaping hook, except perhaps in a museum of by-gones, and since education no longer embraces familiarity with the Bible or the ancestry of Christ, he may be altogether ignorant of the tale of Ruth and Boaz and of the Tree of Jesse. Oblivion has overtaken Hugo's ancient and familiar properties in a way that he isn't to blame. But several poets now are to blame for stuffing their poems with the passing phrases of ordinary talk and journalism. Nothing could be more provincial, or ingratiating. It does imply that the poets are not in earnest - that they don't understand poetry as an art. They are journalists in verse.

When the Second World War had first put the lights out I crossed a square in black London - Russell Square, where I had gone to see T. S. Eliot in his publishing office - and realized that suddenly I was in the unambiguous enjoyment of a real night, I could see stars and a slip of moon which urban light and atmosphere would have concealed normally. Perhaps that week there were London poets first week there was a first experience, what is meant by "star" and "moon". Urbanism - modern everlasting urbanism - does resist poetry. Let me think of Tu Fu in 789 at the Yu-lu-shan Monastery - via-vis T. S. Eliot in Russell Square in 1939 - imagining that he might stay with the Buddhist monks, and would then absorb into

himself "every turn or fold of the landscape", having every bird and flower as his friend.

What universals good for a thousand years can a city-nurtured poet now absorb into himself? Some of course. But he does not effortlessly absorb into himself, effortlessly inherit, weather, seasons, streams, sandbanks, ploughland, thistledown, cockcrow, hills, rocks, sunsets, swallows or Tu Fu's golden orioles or Marvell's green woodpecker.

It is more difficult for him, he is more limited.

(Eliot, though, isn't the fairest example: the New England families of far away St Louis, Mo., habitually returned east for holidays so Eliot absorbed into himself that only a natural New England which does well up into his poems - even if there wasn't enough of it to forefend the abstract.)

Poetry goldsmiths
Perfection of the whole work - if it exists at all - is to be found only in smaller poems - in the poetry goldsmiths; and they are uncommon, and they perfect brooches, bracelets, rings, bangles and mobiles. Ezra Pound was a smaller poet who might have achieved a bracelet perfection if he hadn't fancied himself as a larger poet. He exists in ornaments and fragments.

"Isn't it a marvellous line" - an overzeal for D. H. Lawrence was speaking - "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell? Good enough for Shakespeare."

"But it is Shakespeare."
"Nonsense, it's Lawrence. First line of 'Lucifer'. One of Lawrence's *Last Poems* - you must know it."

No doubt we should all know a famous line by Shakespeare when we see it, even if it opens someone else's poem. But who began this use of lines or phrases from other poems, this deliberate use as if the insertion, the borrowing, the lifting, the quotation was itself a resonant word? Eliot? Pound? Is it related to that Cultural Elsewhere of so much American poetry? Is it compensation for cultural or cultural and social feelings of under-privilege? Harvard or Vandewater Place, St Louis, or Halley, Idaho, remains a long, long way, still, from the sweet Thames or the Tiber or the Illinois. So does Eastwood, Nottingham.

Anyhow the habit is incestuous, a weakness, a decadence, a show-off, a refinement. A man shall not marry his great-grandmother, or mell, in this way, with his great-grandfather. Has any American poet ever written a great love poem? A great love poem of frank acceptance and mutuality? There are poems which bear curiously on the negative answer, for instance Poe's "Helen, thy beauty is to me" Emily Dickinson's "My life closed twice before its close", Robinson's "Lute Haverall", Eliot's "La Figlia che Piange", or John Crowe Ransom's "Spectral Lovers".

Lovers they knew they were, but why unclesup, unclesup? Why should two lovers be frozen apart in fear?

And yet they were, they were. Love poems which don't reach the horizontal, or the bed. Whether Americans like it or not, admit or not, their art galleries have to be hung with the poems of Europe, Japan and China.

"Entirely my own way"
Whitman: "Unto the world and unworldly by any influence outside the soul within me, I have had my say entirely my own way, and put it unerringly on record, the value thereof to be decided by time." He was a poet. Structuralist poets may teach us that much of what poets may think is their own way isn't their own way. But enough is their own, enough.

How Whitman's rhetoric deflates to a wrinkled balloon when he unhooks too long from the objectivity of his great America - stars, illos, rivers, wharfs, ferries, the cavalry in the ford, the net around the fish, and all of his "eternal use of the earth", his "primal quality of Nature". How he conveys when his exclamation is particular.

Whitman thrilled to a high voltage of new America, a beginning, a continent flowering into what subsequent

flowers, if only he had known Hopkins, his contemporary in England, thrilled, while it was possible, to a high voltage of divine, opening its apparent flowers again, it is hard to see how there can be grandly equivalent coincidence of the poet and the poet that the best poems are still to be written, and that in his opinion "I sufficiently enclose the name Poet, nor can any rule or convention ever except an exception may arise and disregard it?"

Major, minor
"Beautiful habitations, sums of delight I come across a line I was again labelled a 'minor poet'. Who was it that first united 'minor' and 'poet' into that label of contempt which is how it serves? To find one would be an exercise in the perhaps profitless history of the demeaning of poetry by criticism. Let's assume 'poetry', as we use it, should mean good poetry or good poems or good parts of poems. Then I take a 'minor poet' only or chiefly to be one whose good poems are less frequent or less good, though they maintain an authenticity of insight and cadence and form, ie 'minor poet' should be a label of honour, instead of a label of denigration pasted on by the prig who must always affect the summa - as if 'major poets' didn't also write minor poems most of their time; as if minor poetry wasn't the bulk of all poetry, and as if we could do without it.

We are right to be fond of poems which, whatever else they are up to, report with intimacy and immediacy the pleasures of the writer, Coleridge on the water way comes down in a galley off the Quantocks, Ronsard in his enjoyment of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Achete des abricots,
Des pommons, des artichots,
Des fraises, et de la crème.
C'est en Esté ce qu'il aime.
Quand sur le bord d'un ruisseau
Je le mange au bruit de l'eau,
Etendu sur le rive,
Ou dans un antre sauvage.
or St-Amant, after Ronsard, on the scent of cheeses and melons, Camille Cotton on the refreshment in a Caviar on drinking in Alexandria or on making love to an attractive boy in a squallid midland café, Whitman finding sea-birds' nests on the edges of Long Island, early Irish poets whose names we don't know, on watercress watching the sea from a hermitage on an island, Chinese poets on the contemplation of mountains, the New Zealand poet Mary Ursula Bethell on the coming out of rock-flowers and the like in her garden -

"Established" is a good word, much used in garden books.
"The plant, when established, quickly becomes established quickly, quickly."

For I am fugitive, I am very fugitive.
Those that come after me will gather there.
And watch, as I do now, the white
Burst in the sunshine, from its pale green

If we record too few of such pleasures of our own, whatever you may suppose the poetry has become, we shall certainly be duller by that amount to our own posterity.

How many of us in fact discover our convictions from what we write, instead of writing in obedience to realized convictions? "We would like to include a statement from you about your own work," said a former reference book about the literature of today. What statement could I make? I found myself replying "I deduce from my poems that I write by the conviction: grace enters and exits the living; they start up - symbols of the living; they vanish, and are seen again in glimpses; or are lost and recollected; the treasure of sentiment to suppose that we can be anaesthetized by the satisfaction of those graces, but the grace is not, while we realize the conspiracy of the bad and the good, admit as well, and to celebrate, and be thankful for these consoling graces, our vaticum." Perhaps the metaphors weren't too mixed.

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Idealizing the people

Leonard Schapiro

PETER K. CHRISTOFF
K. S. Aksakov: A Study in Ideas.
An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism.
Volume 3.
488pp. Princeton University Press.
£26.50.
0 691 05334 0

The first two volumes of Peter K. Christoff's monumental history of the Slavophiles dealt with Khomiakov (1804-60) and Kirceevsky (1806-56), the founding fathers. The rather younger Konstantin Sergeevich Aksakov (1817-60) was the eldest son of Sergei Aksakov, familiar to English readers as the author of the enchanting *Family Chronicle*. Konstantin spent the whole of his short life in the comfort of his united and affectionate family, almost entirely in Moscow and in the neighbouring family estate. Eccentric and essentially childlike, he remained so closely dependent on his father that he barely survived the sorrow over his death in 1859. He had no intimate male friends, and no woman's name figures in his uneventful life. He was, however, intellectually the most intemperate of the Slavophiles, carrying to such extremes his veneration for a Muscovite Russia largely of his own imagination, and of what he believed were the peculiar virtues of the common people of Russia, that his friends at times despaired of his mental balance. But Professor Christoff shows (as did Dr Wallick before him) that Konstantin Aksakov revealed some insights which his more sober-minded fellow worshippers of pre-Petrine Russia lacked.

Like most of his intellectual contemporaries, he came under the spell of Hegel and of the Western philosophical influences of the legendary Stankevich circle. But this did not much beyond his time in the University of Moscow, and in the 1840s he drew closer to Khomiakov and Kirceevsky. This was the period when polemics between the "Slavophiles" and the "Westerners" were gathering force, and in Russia conditions for a Westerner to change ideas usually meant breaking with Hegelian friends. Herzen, who at that time was a description of his emotional parting from Konstantin Aksakov. There were few like S. Turgenev who could combine dislike of Slavophile ideas with affectionate friendship for their proponents such as Kirceevsky or the two sons of Sergei Aksakov, Konstantin and the younger Ivan.

Although "Slavophile" and "Westerner" were originally pejorative nick-names, a real intellectual gulf divided the two camps. The following summary of the main differences between them is based on Wallick's *The Slavophile Controversy*. The Slavophiles opposed the Western ideal of the "autonomous individual", which they claimed led to the disintegration of society; they propounded an individual ready to resign his autonomy in favour of the communal faith uniting it, urging identification with the community (sobornost) against the more conventional view of freedom. Then, the Slavophiles rejected the universality of reason and the human element in favour of "Christian universalism", which they identified with the Orthodox Church and the Russian people.

For the Westerners, progress meant the replacement of traditional laws by judicial and political norms. In this view, played a beneficent part. The Slavophiles deplored this effect of the abolitionist state. Peter the Great's state (Peter the Great's state, in the case of Russia) and urged constitutional forms, but on common faith, traditions and customs. While both factions regarded the simple people as the bulwark of traditional, traditional values, the Westerners wished "the people" to be raised to the level of consciousness, while the Slavophiles called for a "return to the people". Finally, while the Slavophiles rejected Western capitalism outright,

the whole structure of the Westerners' thought implied the acceptance of bourgeois capitalist development as a progressive factor of society.

Christoff concludes that the Slavophiles "were more astute in seeing the unlikelihood of successfully transplanting the Western type of individual freedom and unbridled, mid-nineteenth-century, laissez faire economic enterprise on the centuries-old Russian communal soil". That is one way of putting it. The Slavophiles could hardly have been more wrong in their idealization of "the people" (narod) which most level-headed critics who knew the Russian peasants derided. But the Slavophiles were much nearer the truth than the Marxists in their contention that the village commune was alive and kicking: the anarchy of 1917 showed how strong the communal organization was in peasant tradition - far stronger than the various committees which the hapless Provisional Government tried to graft on to peasant life. Indeed, the commune survived for a further ten years, and was destroyed only by Stalin's system of state control of farming masquerading as a communal system. In many ways, the whole process of emancipation from serfdom, inaugurated in 1861, may be viewed as a struggle between patriarchal traditionalism and modernizing Westernism, with the former defending essentially Slavophile values. The attempt by Stolypin, last Prime Minister of stature of the Russian Empire, to turn Russia into a Rechtsstaat was cut short by the First World War, and according to research carried out by D. J. Male, the modest progress which it had achieved by the time hostilities started in breaking up

the commune was completely reversed by the peasants in 1917 and in the succeeding eight years. It can be argued that it was the failure of the Stolypin reforms which enabled Stalin to restore the essential features of serfdom.

The moderate revolution of February 1917 unleashed a wave of peasant anarchy on the land and in the ranks of the army, where the only thought was for personal gain and safety - land and peace at any price - "the onslaught of the inner barbarian".

Life in the commune represented the supreme Orthodox principle of *sobornost*, in which the individual merged in harmony with his society, his voice achieving true (not false, Western) individuality as a member of a "chorus". Aksakov's major contribution to the debate on emancipation (he died before the serfs were freed) was to advocate the survival and bolstering of the commune.

His views on the commune, and generally on the superiority of the people, were closely related to his distinctive opinions on government and politics. In this respect he followed other Slavophiles in Russian thought down to the present day. But the author sees "the seeds of Pan-Slavism" in Konstantin's patriotic reaction to the Crimean War. I doubt this, if only for the reason that chauvinistic responses to the Crimean War have emanated from persons who could not possibly be regarded as Slavophile - Turgenev, for example. Pan-Slavism, with its hard-headed, assertive Russian nationalism, antisemitism and expansionism, has nothing to do with the gentle, somewhat naive, sentimental and unrealistic Konstantin Aksakov.

Ideology in the kitchen

Alan Davidson

LESLEY CHAMBERLAIN
The Food and Cooking of Russia
330pp. Allen Lane. £9.95.
0 7139 1468 8

There has been a modest plenitude of Russian cookery books written by émigrés, which recall pre-revolutionary Russian cookery in upper-class households and which often echo the recipes of Elena Molokhovets, whose *Gift to Young Housewives* (St Petersburg, 1861-80, still not fully translated into English) is the classic work. There are also Soviet cookery books, a number of which are available in English; most of them composed in the tradition of *A Book of Tasty and Healthy Foods* (Stalinist work of the 1930s), still popular, although much questioned in its later editions. Only Helen and George Papashvili, in *The Cooking of Russia* (Time/Life Books, 1971), have offered a glimpse of the relationship between pre-revolutionary and Soviet cooking and of the vitality and persistence of certain culinary traditions.

Lesley Chamberlain's book spans the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and provides the general survey which has been lacking. Since one of her aims is to provide interesting and good recipes, she has given more space to older material than to contemporary sources (the bibliography cites only one of the many Soviet recipe books which have appeared since the Second World War). But enough is said to give an idea of the changes which have occurred and to show that they amount to a limited evolution rather than to a revolution. Her collection of recipes, the majority of which are set in their historical and social contexts, is all the better because it reflects her own experience of living in Moscow and travelling in the Soviet Union for a year, with one foot in the markets (not just the privileged shops for foreigners) and the other in the Lenin Library.

The author, who is a graduate in Russian studies, presented a paper on "Ideology and the Growth of a Russian School of Cooking" to the Oxford Symposium on National and Regional Styles of Cooking, 1981. This, which is modestly omitted from the bibliography of the present work,



A country mushroom seller, reproduced from the book reviewed here.

demonstrated her disposition to examine cookery in relation to political philosophy, and history and illuminated some of the Russian cookery and Russian attitudes to food and cooking. This material is reflected in many parts of her book; woven together with pleasing literary quotations and allusions, it turns what would have been a good cookery book into something more.

Those who like to keep the books of Elizabeth David and Jane Grigson at their bedside as well as in their kitchens will appreciate its discursiveness. It is well exemplified by the chapters on *peas and pasta*, *pasta*, and *mushrooms*. The Russian national passion for

mushrooms is vividly described with the help of quotations from Nabokov and from the late well-known Aksakov, author of "Remarks and Observations of a Mushroom Hunter" (*Collected Works*, 1860) - illustrated here by a charming eighteenth-century print of a country mushroom seller. Among others, Tolstoy and Gogol are aptly cited.

But Chamberlain deserves to be quoted herself, for example on pies. The best-looking pies I have ever seen in Russia were sold at Pskov railway station, one of those beautiful long, low, Russian nineteenth-century buildings painted a pale green and trimmed in white, like a piece of Wedgwood or an ice

people is eternal - the public is a passing phenomenon. The essay in which these views were expounded, incidentally, caused considerable alarm in government circles, which were always suspicious of the Slavophiles. (It is intriguing to note similar persecution of contemporary Slavophiles by the Soviet authorities today.) The reason why the *narod* was, in Aksakov's view, so blessed with virtues was because of its Orthodox faith, and of that model of orthodox society, the village commune, the *mir*. Life in the commune represented the supreme Orthodox principle of *sobornost*, in which the individual merged in harmony with his society, his voice achieving true (not false, Western) individuality as a member of a "chorus". Aksakov's major contribution to the debate on emancipation (he died before the serfs were freed) was to advocate the survival and bolstering of the commune.

Professor Christoff's excellent, if somewhat poorly organized, study hardly deals with the question of Konstantin Aksakov's influence - there is room for a systematic investigation of the vitality of Slavophile ideas in Russian thought down to the present day. But the author sees "the seeds of Pan-Slavism" in Konstantin's patriotic reaction to the Crimean War. I doubt this, if only for the reason that chauvinistic responses to the Crimean War have emanated from persons who could not possibly be regarded as Slavophile - Turgenev, for example. Pan-Slavism, with its hard-headed, assertive Russian nationalism, antisemitism and expansionism, has nothing to do with the gentle, somewhat naive, sentimental and unrealistic Konstantin Aksakov.

cake, separating the street from the railway line. The *butyr* had just taken delivery of a fresh wooden tray of large pies, which gleamed golden brown under their egg-polish and were warm to the touch. It was a terrible disappointment then to break one open and find inside nothing but unseasoned rice awash in starch. Literally the tradition of grand cooking for travellers had gone hollow.

The term "Russian" is notoriously elastic. Here the focus is on Russia proper but many recipes from other Republics of the Soviet Union are included, on the basis that these have now become part of the Russian repertoire. Some indeed have, and the author's contention that Georgia has usurped the culinary influence which France used to exert is an interesting one; but she may have over-estimated the extent to which the ordinary Moscow housewife has adopted dishes from, for instance, Uzbekistan. Obtaining the ingredients can be a formidable problem, and the Russians are highly conservative as to their stubborn refusal to welcome "Ocean Paste" (an excellent product made from Antarctic krill) on the otherwise rather bare shelves of their fish-shops demonstrates.

The recipes themselves are well presented, usually with both Russian and English titles, but sometimes with unhappy hybrid names such as "Fish kochuch". There are so many good recipes that the choice of examples is difficult. Let me cite the one for *schchi*, the classic Russian soup; that for *syrmiki*, curd cheese fritters which were Chamberlain's favourite breakfast in Russia; the admirably clear instructions for making *blini*; and also *Cherkeskaya kasha*, a fine pudding said to have been invented by the then Russian Finance Minister, to commemorate his country's victory over Napoleon in 1812. It would seem that this is an example of something which could hardly happen nowadays. Yet, a few pages further we learn that it was Mikoyan, the arch-survivor among Soviet ministers, who set up the first Soviet ice-cream factory in the 1920s and who can claim credit for the excellence of that product. For all the references, the present echoes the past. Moreover Mikoyan's life has lived on, while Curlew's pudding, so Russians tell me, has long ago fallen into oblivion.

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Great Truths of Creation

David Bindman

IAIN BAIN (Editor)

The Watercolours and Drawings of Thomas Bewick and his Workshop Apprentices

Two volumes, 233 and 230 pp.
Gordon Fraser Gallery, £125 the set.
0 85092 057 7

Thomas Bewick is a classic victim of the effects of over-familiarity. We see his designs everywhere — on biscuit tins, National Trust mugs, newspaper articles on nature conservation — with the result that he has been retrospectively neutralized into a genteel proto-ecologist when he was nothing of the kind. The ubiquity of his designs was partly a consequence of the technique of wood-engraving which he perfected; this made it possible for his designs to be printed virtually without limit. Many of his blocks have still not worn out after nearly 200 years of use. His watercolours and drawings, on the other hand, are little known, but on the evidence of these magnificent produced volumes there is a case to be made for considering them in their own right. Bewick's colour, and especially that of his assistant, Robert Johnson, who died in 1796 at the age of twenty-six, can be exquisite and suggest nuances of feeling lost in the more rugged medium of wood-engraving. Even so they can never displace the wood-engravings and for all their charms are rarely as rich in content as the final realizations in the *History of Quadrupeds and British Birds*.

In his excellent introduction Iain Bain gives due weight to the role of Bewick's workshop and we can now begin to see more clearly the artistic personalities of Johnson, Luke Clennell, his son Robert Bewick, and others who went from Newcastle to take the new method to an eager metropolis. Bewick never escaped from the kind of provincial workshop which took on all sorts of engraving work, and as head of his own shop he often gave his name to work produced by his talented apprentices. He was almost always responsible for the preliminary drawings conceived all or animals, and probably conceived all but a few of the tailpieces, but the watercolour or final wood engraving could be by anybody in the shop. It can be difficult to tell whether a watercolour is by Bewick or by an apprentice, but the wood engravings he finished himself reveal more obviously his distinctive sensibility and

vit. In some cases, as this book reveals, the transition from the drawing to the final wood engraving can result in a complete transformation. In "Winnowing Corn in a Farmyard" a banal farmyard scene is given an added dimension by the addition of dead birds pinned to the wall of the barn; the farmyard is now filled with a seemingly infinite number of creatures, and fieldfares fly above in formation. The design of "A Roadman breaking Stones", the watercolour of which was transformed by bringing forward the clump of trees from the background and hanging a bottle, presumably the reward for hard labour, from a branch above the workman.

The effect of such additions, however imperceptible, is to give a moral dimension to Bewick's art which it becomes, especially in the tailpieces, the passionate expression of an uncompromising view of the world. Though brought up in the Church of England, Bewick's temperament was essentially radical and nonconformist. There is a strong didactic element in his books on animals and birds: the world of Aesop's fables is never far away. He excuses his evident delight in depicting nature because of its efficacy in drawing "the attention of youth to the Great Truths of Creation". He interspersed his attempts to "try to put life into dead skins" with what he called punning "tale-pieces of gaiety and humour" which also tend to illustrate some truth, or point some moral.

These tailpieces are perhaps his greatest artistic achievement; at their best they are incomparable in their subtlety of observation and technique. The social reality of the landscape in the years around 1800 is never more convincingly and unsentimentally rendered than by Bewick, yet observation is never an end in itself. Though nostalgia for childhood is a constant note in his art and writings, he is quite without the selective vision of the eighteenth-century Pastoral which makes the rugged poor appear as happy as they are virtuous. Nor on the other hand does he regret, like George Crabbe, a lost rustic Eden and recall, in the face of rural misery, "the swains, who daily labour done, / With rural games play'd down the setting sun; / Who struck with matchless force the bounding ball, / Or made the pond'rous quail obliquely fall".

Bewick's world is defined by the few miles between Newcastle, where he had his workshop, and the farm at

Cherryburn, twelve miles to the west on the south bank of the Tyne, where he was born in 1753. His father managed a colliery, and smoking chimneys often appear in the distance of Bewick's wood engravings as does the steeple of St Nicholas's Cathedral. Yet more central to his vision are the chance-upon emblems of mortality: the gibbet and the tombstone. Like a churchyard poet Bewick often invites melancholy reflection on the shortness of life, but there is also a mordant Northumbrian edge in such images as the tombstone by moonlight, inscribed "Good Times & Bad Times & All Times get over". Even tombstones are subject to mortal decay: in one tailpiece they lie broken and forgotten on the shore, cut off by the sea from a decaying church. Most of the tailpieces, however, point humorously at human folly, showing for instance a man crossing the river on an overhanging branch which surely cannot bear his weight. In "Saving the Toll" a cowman fords the river with his cow instead of paying the toll to cross the bridge; as a result he loses his hat which is worth more than the toll.

Whether consciously or not, Bewick seems intent on undermining the townsman's vision of the countryside as a refuge from reality. Beggars,

thieves and wounded soldiers populate his countryside, and he has a sharp eye for social distinctions, as in the incongruous scene of a gentleman hunter asking the way of a sullen vagrant. Little boys taunt and torture animals, and this does rouse his indignation, but he tells us plainly in *British Birds* which birds are particularly good to eat, often signifying this by placing a fortunate hunter in the background. Rustic lovers never make an appearance, and his autobiography is full of discourses on the evils of illicit sex and the horror of venereal disease. He claimed that one of the reasons he disliked London was "seeing such a number of fine looking women engaged in the wretched business of *Street Walking*".

If sex has no place in Bewick's world he had no inhibitions about excretory functions; in fact he appears to revel in them: a man pees against his shadow by moonlight, a little boy helps his toy boat along by aiming into the water behind it, and the contents of a vat being carried by two men to the dye house are alluded to by two men relieving themselves against a pub wall. These, however, are inoffensive compared to the notorious "Pigsty Netty" which Bewick eventually felt bound to alter, but even in its

expurgated state it still complains from his daughter eye shows a man, his bottom fully exposed defecating into a pigsty, and his pencil drawing through watercolours until it was altered in the netty. When Bewick was challenged by some mark of disapprobation on those on cruelty — where a Gallin was seen on the back ground", he does mean it to be read as an image of human degradation, with even a retreating in disgust at man's filthiness.

Bewick's unsentimental vision is easily vitiated by insensitive treatment and we can be grateful that a presentation of his designs in these volumes does complete justice to the qualities. The reproductions are excellent; the colour bears comparison with the original and care has been taken to match the colour of the paper on which they are drawn. The layout is spacious and clear and though it is of information it is also extremely pleasant to handle. I shall treasure my copy.

Total interaction

Terry Eagleton

ARNOLD HAUSER

The Sociology of Art
Translated by Kenneth J. Northcott
776pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£19.95
0 7100 9231 8

Dialectical thought, like sincerity, is a sine qua non which means little in itself. That things should be grasped in their living development and active interrelations, that events should not be abstracted from the complex totalities of which they are part: such doctrines are at once an essential corrective to empiricist myopia and by now, in a certain German tradition of thought, the merest commonplaces. Throughout the first four hundred or so pages of this mighty tome, first published in Germany in 1974, Arnold Hauser takes an extraordinarily long time to urge the dialectical indissociability of art and society, form

and content, subject and object, history and structure, Nature and culture, past and present. A well-nigh pathological drive to comprehensiveness powers this relentless enterprise: unable either to sift or beneath its own encyclopedic erudition despite the fact that the translator has charitably shortened its sentences for English consumption.

"The individual and society are indivisible", and systematically historicized, "Art and society are in a state of 'continuous' mutual dependence"; "subject and object can only be conceived and defined in conjunction with one another"; such propositions, as true and important as they are empty formal, are interspersed with sweeping historical analyses of authentically Hauserian brilliance. But whereas in Hauser's earlier work theory provided the scaffolding for a pioneering materialist history of art, the relations between the two are here injudiciously inverted: *The Sociology of Art* is offered as a philosophical summa of the thirty years' labour which gave birth to its history, its epochal volumes of art history, adding that *oeuvre* to furnish fascinating illustrations of Hegelian-Marxist commonplaces.

That hyphen between "Hegelian" and "Marxist" is a good deal more troubling than the authoritative tones of this global philosophizing would have us believe. The theoretical model with which Hauser works, here as elsewhere, is familiarly Hegelian-Marxist: social classes born of economic struggle and seen as relatively cohesive entities, are history's dynamic agents, generating homogeneous forms of consciousness which in turn give rise to forms of art. It is a model crucially dependent on the Hegelian notion of "mediation", not least if it is to avoid an intolerable reductionism; but Hauser tells us, rather abruptly, as early as his Preface, that he now believes the whole concept of mediation to be "fictional", and argues instead for the significance of untheorizable "leaps" from one level to another. How far his method can accommodate such mysterious leaps without succumbing itself entirely is a question the book fails adequately to answer.

If Hauser casually undermines his own method in this way, he does so even more strikingly in another, any cope with the social conditions of art seriously crippled from the outset. Hauser, however, vigorously opposes these two realms in violation of his own dialectical principles: social meanings and conditions are one thing, aesthetic values quite another. Ironically, it is his very Hegelian tenets which force him into this position: Hegelian Marxism

tends to approach art "genetically" in terms of its moment of production, and so foregoes that attention to the historical reception of artefacts that the problem of aesthetic value might most resourcefully tackled. Hauser is admittedly aware of "reception theory", and generally enthusiastic about it; but the heavily genetic bent of his own theory prevents him seeing that there might here be a escape route of kinds from his dogmatic dualism.

There is a third sense in which Hauser's theoretical model tends to come to grief on its own premises. For though in practice he tends toward a Marxist notion of dialectic which assumes the primacy of economic conditions in the shaping of a culture, he does not, theoretically speaking, credit such primacy at all. For his readers, naturally, this will be evidence of his good sense: it is also, unfortunately, testimony to the wholly circular nature of his theory of culture, which boils down to asserting the everything interacts with everything else. Constrained to choose between Marx and Hegel, between a unconscionable materialism and a emptily circular dialectic, Hauser opt ultimately for the latter. It is for this reason that the first four hundred pages of his book produce sentences which are unexceptionable in their proportion to their uninterestingness.

The final sections of the study are devoted to updating Hauser's previous explorations in art history, to encompass the contemporary world of the mass media and the modern avant-garde. There are even some remarks about the Beatles, in incongruous an occurrence at the end of Roger McGough. How apt in Lukács in his gloomy critique of modern art is, indeed, the Hauser's problems: he refuses, gratifyingly, Lukács's tendency to dismiss revolting stages as decadent, but apart from a perceptive passage on film (he worked for the film industry for a point) has little to add to the lamentations for high culture of the later Frankfurt School.

The final pages of the book contain a sense of political resignation which may in fact provide a key to the book's problems. Hauser, in his Preface that he has effectively abandoned Marxism, at least as any kind of political ideal, possible, he insists, to "agree with Marxism as a philosophy of history, society without being a Marxist in the politically activist sense". What is possible to be a wholly contemporary Marxist? or not, it seems to be, by the standards of the world and of the various markets regulating freedom of production, employment and liberty guaranteed by the Fifth and

PETER H. IRONS

The New Deal Lawyers
351pp. Guilford: Princeton University Press. £14.60.
0 691 04688 3

ARCHIBALD COX

Freedom of Expression
89pp. Harvard University Press.
£4.50 (paperback, £2.10).
0 674 31912 5

Sooner or later we shall adopt a Bill of Rights in Britain and give the judges the awesome job of interpreting it. So the history and practice of judicial enforcement of rights in the United States is or ought to be an object of intense interest to British political scientists.

There is, on the face of it, a great gulf of time and sentiment between the Supreme Court of Chief Justice Hughes and that of Chief Justice Warren E. Burger. The handling of Roosevelt's New Deal legislation in the 1930s fixed for many British observers an image both of the Court and of judicial review as a political institution. To allow judges to invalidate the work of popularly elected Governments was undemocratic and reactionary. Nine old men, it seemed, had shaped the constitution to fit their inarticulate major premises (not knowing until they were told by Mr Justice Holmes and Professor Harold Laski that they had any). But in the post-war years Supreme Court judges of various political origins and degrees of idiosyncrasy have earned better testimonials. They have expanded the civil rights of minorities, improved the status of women, protected the privileges of criminal defendants, rejected prohibitions on abortion and contraception, defended the separation of powers against overweening Presidents, and established the most liberal regime of free speech and political action of all the Western democracies.

These two contrasting worlds of constitutional jurisprudence can be seen side by side in Peter Irons's study of the New Deal litigation of the 1930s and Archibald Cox's survey of the Court's decisions in the 1970s on issues involving the First Amendment guarantee of free expression. As to the change in orientation from the old world to the new there are well-known social scientific explanations. The Supreme Court follows the election returns. A switch in time saved the nine justices from the consequences of their attachment to Herbert Spencer's Social Statics. A constitutional revolution in 1939 transformed the Court's attitude to judicial review; and so on. And yet to read these two books together is to be reminded of the continuities and similarities rather than the differences between the judicial controversies of the 1930s and those of the post-war period.

Irons provides a detailed step-by-step account of the legal issues faced by three of the major New Deal agencies: the National Recovery Administration, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the National Labor Relations Board. The administrative and litigation strategies of each agency are followed through to the confrontation with the Supreme Court. Despite the extremity of the economic situation it was inevitable that the activities of the regulatory agencies would run up against limitations set by the existing understandings of the due process and commerce clauses. Restriction of production, licensing, price fixing, regulation of contracts and of the labour market were bound to be attacked as attempts by the Federal Government and Congress to exceed their powers to levy taxation and to regulate inter-state commerce.

The major Supreme Court decisions (the *Panama Oil Refining*, *Schechter Poultry*, *Carter Coal* and *Jones and Laughlin* cases) which invalidated New Deal legislation turned in various degrees on three points. Could the various markets regulating freedom of production, employment and liberty guaranteed by the Fifth and

Fourteenth Amendments? Second, could Congress, consistently with the separation of powers, delegate to executive officers an undefined power to draft rules and codes having legislative effect? Third, could the power of Congress to regulate commerce between the states be invoked to control industrial and agricultural processes inside the

The last was perhaps the most recalcitrant issue. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration, for example, wanted to license milk production. The AAA lawyers argued that unstabilized milk markets affected the price of butter. Butter in turn moved extensively in inter-state commerce. Therefore the federal government had power by licensing to control abuses and remove conditions that adversely affected inter-state commerce in butter. At first a majority of the Court rejected such arguments, and the whole structure of the New Deal seemed threatened. In the end, after the *West Coast Hotel* and *Jones and Laughlin Steel Company* cases, both the due process and commerce clause barriers to regulation crumbled. But despite popular mythology it was not by a dialectical or revolutionary leap into a new constitutional era. Possibly the *Zeitgeist* got into Mr Justice Roberts, but the Court had frequently been divided and by 1937 the majority had been persuaded to fashion an interpretation of the commerce clause that upheld the National Labour Relations Act by conceding to Congress a right to control industrial relations and regulate strikes on the supposition that they might impede the free flow of commerce between the States.

In so doing the Hughes Court forged a weapon which helped thirty years later to sustain important sections of the Federal Civil Rights legislation of 1964. Congress was able to act under the commerce clause to attack racially segregated facilities inside a state that might impede inter-state travel or that was involved with the flow of goods across state lines. Moreover in the *Carolene Products* case the Hughes court had suggested the possibility that

Shaping the constitution

Geoffrey Marshall

cases involving the restriction of electoral and First Amendment freedoms might require a different approach from those that involved the restriction of entrepreneurial and economic liberties. So the Court described by Professor Cox can be seen to have followed in some degree signposts erected by its predecessor. Nothing in judicial argument is ever entirely new.

The protection of freedom of speech and expression on which Cox's short study concentrates raises a number of questions. What is "Speech"? Are some forms of non-speech conduct protected if they communicate beliefs or ideas? Under what circumstances can the interests of the community in protecting morality and securing privacy or public order, justify restricting what can be said, printed, published or broadcast? In the 1960s the Warren Court extended the boundaries of free expression in a number of directions. It established the right of American citizens to defame politicians, to enjoy pornography, to carry sexually explicit epithets on their clothing, to abuse the flag, and (if the mood should take them) to make obscene threats to police officers. In the 1970s freedom of expression broadened down from precedent to precedent.

In one or two areas the judges appointed by Richard Nixon have moved more cautiously. In *F.C.C. v. Pacifica Foundation* they failed to extend constitutional protection to a twelve-minute broadcast of a recital entitled "Filthy Words". In *Young v. American Mini Theatres* they upheld a local ordinance regulating the siting of adult theatres and book stores. Mr Justice Stevens asserting that "Few of us would march our sons and daughters off to war to preserve the citizen's right to see Specified Sexual Activities exhibited in the theatres of our choice." In defamation suits the Warren Court's extensions of the public figure doctrine seems to have been halted. In *Stephens v. U.S.* an ex-convict was restrained from publishing an account of the agency's activities in breach of his contract of employment.

On the other hand the Burger Court has discovered some new categories of speech and communication eligible for protection. Political campaign expenditure by individuals, groups and corporations has been immunized from regulation imposed by Federal Election Campaign contribution legislation of 1974. In addition a new category of communication has been uncovered, namely "commercial speech". Commercial speech (better known perhaps as advertising) raises complex philosophical issues. It comprises a mixture of communicative propositions. Some indicate a willingness to engage in commercial transactions. Others describe the alleged properties of objects or persons. In matters of politics, morality and religion liberals from John Stuart Mill onwards have supposed it wrong to suppress assertions on the ground of alleged falsity or perniciousness of content, holding truth to be irrelevant or at least many-sided, and best established by the higgling of a free market in ideas. In relation to economic or entrepreneurial speech however, radicals tend to become regulators and dirigistes. The Supreme Court has nevertheless concluded that the right of various professional groups such as lawyers, pharmacists and dentists to advertise (ie, to communicate ideas and opinions about the nature and availability of their services) is a part or segment of the right to free speech.

Other segments or implications of the free speech doctrine have been discovered, some of them more loosely related to it, perhaps by the notion that they may be preconditions of, or encouragements to the free exchange of ideas. Among these are the right of access to information held by government, the right to privacy or immunity from intrusion and the privilege of journalists to obstruct the course of justice in the interest of keeping open the supply of information.

What seems to be missing from the judicial development of these various rights and immunities is a satisfying body of theory that relates one to another and explains the limits of their

application. In some of the cases there is a suggestion that forms of expression can be divided into pure or first-class speech and less pure second-class speech. The latter may enjoy less protection and its content be regulated if regulation is directly related to some substantial governmental interest and is not more extensive than is required to secure that interest. Pure and higher class speech, it is implied, deserves a higher degree of protection. The allocation of the many and varied forms of expressive conduct to these categories however is a central pose which the last ten years of First Amendment cases have not done much to resolve.

About the work of the present-day Court Cox is not very complimentary, seeing it as unduly "pragmatic and particularistic". There have been, he suggests, too many individual and dissenting opinions and in some areas too little effort to support decisions by reference to the existing body of established law. One explanation offered for this is "the breaking down of an older body of law under the pressures of legal positivism and legal realism". This seems implausible since both positivism and realism have been pressing on American judges and jurists for most of the present century and it seems odd to suppose that they have only at this date contrived to fragment the jurisprudence of the Burger Court. Cox however has another explanation that seems nearer to the bone. It is the increasing number and rapid turnover of law clerks writing draft opinions for the Justices. "A heroic effort would be required", Cox says, to impart unity of philosophy and authorship to the law clerks' drafts. This suggests two conclusions. First that the law clerks have served their masters badly (to the point — if the testimony of Messrs Armstrong and Woodward in *The Brethren* is to be believed — of clerical treason). Second, that the present bench must be the feeblest in the history of the United States. The task of imposing unity on the perimanship of newly graduated pragmatists from the Law Schools would not have seemed unbearably heroic to Justices Hughes, Stone, Brandeis or Frankfurter.

Two things remain to be said on the importance of this study. First, scholars will find an expanded canon of necessary texts for approaching the period. Figures like Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Rousseau, Franklin, Edwards and Paine retain their customary prominence. However, extra texts are also made for including such works as Fénelon's *Télémaque*, Marmontel's *Moral Tales*, Salomon Gessner's *The Death of Abel* and, in America, the many accounts of the death of Jane McCrea, William Dunlap's *Andre*, Mary Collier's *The Death of Cain* and Stephen Burroughs's *Memoirs*. Second, *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is a model of restraint in its use of Freudian and archetypal paradigms. With a subject that lends itself so readily to the apparatus of psychohistory, Professor Fillegelman always comes to grips first and last with the historical character of his data. The result is a book that will be useful to many and for years to come.

The recent publication of the biography of Martin Luther King, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, by Stephen B. Oates (150pp. Search Press, £12.50, 0 85532 520 8) completes a quartet of biographies of "Americans profoundly affected by the moral paradox of slavery and racial oppression in a land based on the ideals of the Declaration of Independence" as the author says in his preface. The slave leader Nat Turner, John Brown and Abraham Lincoln were both subjects of the earlier biographies. Oates thinks that "King, though struggling in a subsequent century, was both historically and symbolically linked to these figures of the Civil War era".

A final flowering

Enriqueta Harris

EDWARD J. SULLIVAN and NINA A. MALLORY

Painting in Spain 1650-1700 from North American Collections
182pp. with illustrations.
Guilford: Princeton University Press. £23.
0 691 03992 5

Like many recent exhibition catalogues, this is not a book to be carried in the hand and consulted in front of the originals. In every sense it is a solid volume, to be studied at leisure, a handbook for the student of seventeenth-century Spanish painting. The exhibition, held this year in the Princeton Art Museum and the Institute of Fine Arts, Detroit, followed an important but little publicized show in Seville, *La Época de Murillo* (catalogue by E. Valdespino and J. M. Serrera) and will in turn be followed by major exhibitions in Madrid and London to celebrate the third centenary of Murillo's death. In the catalogue under review, Murillo is also the central figure, by far the best-known artist of the period outside Spain, represented by eight undisputed canvases.

The idea of bringing together works from Madrid and Seville, the two chief centres of painting in the period, was both original and rewarding. Even in Spain it would be hard to find under

one roof such a range of examples of both schools. The forty-seven paintings from public and private collections in the United States and Canada appear mostly to have come there in recent years, but their provenance is not always well documented, presumably for lack of information. Among the dozen illustrations of *desiderata*, paintings presumably not available for the exhibition, is Murillo's early "Self-Portrait", now in an unnamed private collection and last recorded in London in 1904.

The catalogue entries and the full-page plates that follow are arranged in alphabetical order of artist, rather than by schools, and range from the flower-painter Juan de Arellano to Valdespino, Velázquez and Zurbarán, although they died after 1650; belong to an earlier age and are not included. There are some examples of portraiture, still-life and genre, but there is a marked preponderance of religious subjects, from both Seville and Madrid, among them one work by the Neapolitan, Luca Giordano, included presumably because he spent the last years of the century at the Spanish court.

Apart from the Murillos, the most important paintings here are by Claudio Coello, notably a "St Joseph and the Christ Child" (Toledo) reproduced in colour, and those by Valdespino, including a rare "Portrait of an Ecclesiastic" (Amherst). Even more rare is a "Flight into Egypt" (Saragosa) signed "Pareja 1658". But

for the signature it would be hard to believe that this is by the former slave and assistant of Velázquez. There are some disputed or disputable attributions. The "Portrait of a Cavalier" (Ottawa), for instance, is here accepted as by Murillo, although it is thought by Diego Angulo to be by an anonymous painter. The "Annunciation" (Williams) is catalogued as anonymous, but tentatively attributed to José de la Peña, a little-known painter of the school of Madrid, who is here represented by a rare signed work, "Flight into Egypt" (Minneapolis). The alternative attributions of these paintings exemplify the similarities between the productions of Madrid and Seville at this period, often more marked than their differences.

Exceptional though it is, this collection of paintings is, of course, only a sample of the subject of the exhibition. Its organizers have not only compiled long, detailed and illustrated catalogue entries, but have also contributed illustrated, scholarly histories of painting in the second half of the seventeenth century in Madrid and Seville (by Edward J. Sullivan and Nina A. Mallory respectively); these essays will ensure that the book becomes, as they intended a standard reference work. Included is also a brief historical survey by J. H. Elliott of the troubled years of the monarchy that are the background to the last flowering of

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Fruits of disobedience

Robert A. Ferguson

JAY FILLEGELMAN

Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against patriarchal authority, 1750-1800
328pp. Cambridge University Press.
£20.
0 521 23719 X

The men who participated in the American Revolution knew what was soon forgotten: that their experience involved a great mental adventure beyond the actual events of the war for independence. "The war? That was no part of the Revolution," John Adams reminded Thomas Jefferson, "it was only an effect and consequence of it. The Revolution was in the minds of the people... before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington." *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is the first work in American studies to examine the fullest implications of Adams's claim. For Adams was alluding to an underlying change in the way people thought in eighteenth-century culture, *Prodigals and Pilgrims* seeks to document and explain that change. Its special focus brings a new perspective to the revolutionary and early national periods in American history.

Jay Fillegelman argues that there was a larger revolution in the understanding of the nature of authority in the eighteenth century, an intellectual and emotional revolution growing out of a reconsideration of basic family relations and culminating in a rejection of established patterns of authority on every level of Anglo-American society. John Locke's sensationalist epistemology, the general stress of the Enlightenment upon personal autonomy, and the Scottish common-

sense movement with its emphasis on an instinct toward happiness, all combined to place a new emphasis on the integrity of childhood as a separate and crucial stage of development. By mid-century, in Professor Fillegelman's words, "patriarchal family authority was giving way to a new parental ideal characterized by a more affectionate and egalitarian relationship with children." This shift in emphasis would prove decisive for colonials breaking away from their mother country. Locke, after all, encouraged analogies between individual development and the art of government. The rhetoric of familial discord, laced with images of domestic tyranny, quickly became the *lingua franca* of the Revolution. For Thomas Paine and other pamphleteers of rebellion, *Prodigals and Pilgrims* shows how Fillegelman has a gift for showing how the truisms of his field can be extended into new avenues of analysis. For years now we have been told that cross-cultural influences necessarily reflect a borrowed context, instead of reflecting their original nature. The effective response of *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is to pass from the original publications of European texts into a careful study of American abridgments and "chapbook" editions. Just as frequently we have been told that intellectual influences cut across genres, disciplines and boundary-lines, but *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is one of very few works to accept the challenge within the statement. Political, and philosophical treatises, religious tracts, dramatic productions, novels, journals, newspapers, music, painting, advertisements and cartoons — from the Continent as well as England and America — all contribute to a unified analysis. Perhaps most important of all, Fillegelman brings vitality to the age-old assumption that the novel and America connect in a peculiar and

prodigal to the Old. Nor is it surprising that fact would follow fiction in the successful aftermath of the Revolution. Re-examining the iconography of George Washington, Fillegelman shows how early American made Washington both father and father of his country in an image that replaced patriarch with benefactor, precept with example, and the authority of position with the standard of character. When Washington chops down his father's English cherry tree in Parson Weems's fanciful tale, he is "the heroic prodigal whose disobedience secures 'rather than alienates the father'".

Such a brief summary can capture the basic idea but not the richness of *Prodigals and Pilgrims*. Its power and range extend well beyond its thesis. Fillegelman has a gift for showing how the truisms of his field can be extended into new avenues of analysis. For years now we have been told that cross-cultural influences necessarily reflect a borrowed context, instead of reflecting their original nature. The effective response of *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is to pass from the original publications of European texts into a careful study of American abridgments and "chapbook" editions. Just as frequently we have been told that intellectual influences cut across genres, disciplines and boundary-lines, but *Prodigals and Pilgrims* is one of very few works to accept the challenge within the statement. Political, and philosophical treatises, religious tracts, dramatic productions, novels, journals, newspapers, music, painting, advertisements and cartoons — from the Continent as well as England and America — all contribute to a unified analysis. Perhaps most important of all, Fillegelman brings vitality to the age-old assumption that the novel and America connect in a peculiar and

Nothing but the mind

D. M. Armstrong

JOHN FOSTER

The Case for Idealism
309pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£12.50.
0 7100 9010 6

The Case for Idealism is a work of traditional metaphysics. It belongs to what the American philosopher D.C. Williams called "speculative cosmology", as opposed to those more abstract and fundamental inquiries which he called "analytic ontology". John Foster argues for an unfashionable conclusion. He attempts to establish a phenomenalist idealism, very similar to that put forward by Berkeley.

He starts by trying to turn the tables on contemporary materialists about the mind. It is almost an orthodoxy at present among philosophers that the mental is definable in a purely causal or functional way. The concept of the mental does not extend beyond that which stands in various complex relations of cause, and of effect, to bodily behaviour and body stimulation. The mental is only given to us as that which affects, or is affected by, the body. This entails what J.C. Smart called the "topic-neutrality" of mental language. Topic-neutrality allows the logical possibility that what the mental is in physical processes etc. in the brain. (The topic-neutral proposition that somebody called *weaver* is open that it was the doctor who called.) The materialist then appeals to considerations of general scientific plausibility to support the view that the mental is in fact brain-physical.

Mr Foster argues, on the contrary, that it is our concept of the physical which is topic-neutral, thus leaving open the possibility that the true nature of the physical is mental. This is a variation on an old line of thought. Descartes had opposed a non-physical spiritual mind to a purely physical body. But his epistemological demand for an indubitable starting-point for philosophical enquiry led him to assert that the mind was more directly known than the body. We can be assured of the existence of the latter only because we can move from the existence of our mind to the existence of a God who is not a deceiver and so to the truth of our belief in the existence of a physical world. Many idealists since have sought to use Descartes's epistemology against his ontology, and deny, or mentalistically modify, his realist-physicalist doctrine of the material world.

For the details of his argument, however, Foster is more beholden to Berkeley. Our conceptual fix upon the physical is gained purely through the sensible qualities: seen colours, smelled smells, seen and felt spatial relations, and so on. The sensible qualities, however, are mind dependent: they are qualities of our sensations. If the physical lies beyond the sensible qualities, then we have no concrete knowledge of the nature of the physical. The physical might be mental. Indeed, if it is not mental, then it is no more than "something we know not what", which plays a certain causal role.

This is not the end of Foster's argument. Indeed it is only its first step. But it is a crucial step. I am inclined to think that it is taken too easily. Chapter Six, "The Confinement of Qualia", is the critical point. Here, it seems to me, Foster fails to take seriously enough the position of the Direct Realist about perception. A Direct Realist holds that the sensible qualities and relations are objective qualities and relations of physical existents. These qualities and relations may, and presumably do, exist in complete independence of the minds which perceive them.

Foster takes the view that when somebody has a sensation of red, he is veridical, illusory or hallucinatory; then the sensible quality of redness actually exists. However, we do not sense a red sense-datum: he rejects an act/object datum. Rather, the sensation is an instance of (sensible) redness, and because sensations are mental, sensible redness is a mental quality.

A Direct Realist, however, will maintain that a sensation of red is a perception, which may or may not be veridical, of a physically red surface, for instance the surface of a ripe tomato. The perception itself, whether veridical or illusory, need not be red, any more than the belief that the moon is made of green cheese is a little sphere of green cheese. If the Direct Realist is also a materialist then he will think of the sensation of red as a firing of neurons in the brain.

Foster does bring various arguments against Direct Realism. One, perhaps the strongest, is that in the case of the so-called secondary qualities—colour, sound, smell and so on—there is no scientific reason to think that these sensible qualities really qualify external objects. All we have in the object are the scientifically respectable primary qualities. The Direct Realist should meet this, I believe, by identifying the secondary qualities with certain complexes, perhaps idiosyncratic complexes, of primary qualities. To take the simplest case as illustration, sounds are nothing but certain sorts of air-wave.

This identification should not be made in the causal-functional form which Descartes from John Locke: that public sounds are just those physical happenings (viz. air-waves) which produce suitable sorts of sensation in suitable persons. To say this is to give back the pass to Foster. What is better, I think, is what may be called a gestalt model. We pick out sounds as a whole, in much the same way that we often pick out faces, complex shapes, etc. as a whole. Unlike faces and shapes, however, we are unable, even when we give the task our closest attention, to pick out the constituents of sounds. In fact, we have scientific reason to believe, sounds are patterns of air-waves. This view is very unappealing phenomenologically, but it seems to have much else in its favour. It has not lacked upholders besides the present reviewer. Foster does not discuss it.

Foster's best case is perhaps that provided by bodily sensations such as itches. There is a special sensible

quality connected with itches, yet Foster argues, we can hardly conceive of this quality existing independently of sensations of itches. It is merely made similar use of pain.) But it even in this, which is the best case for Foster, there exists a Direct Realist account of the situation. To have an itch is to have a perception (a bodily perception or proprioception), a perception which may or may not be veridical, that a disturbance of a highly specific sort is going on in a certain portion of the body. This disturbance, the Direct Realist will say, could exist unperceived. Those who think the scientific considerations about the secondary qualities canvassed above will then identify the quality with, say, stimulation of certain peripheral receptors. However, one American philosopher, the late James Corman, thought of the quality as additional to, or emergent upon, such stimulation of receptors. An odd view, in my opinion. But in many ways less odd than some which Foster espouses.

Foster does say that if we think of sensations in terms of a traditional act/object distinction—sensations as acts of awareness with the sensible qualities qualifying whatever the acts are awareness of—then the sensations can only be understood as especially vivid ways of conceiving. But what Foster here regards as a *reductio ad absurdum*, I would regard as good sense. He thinks that, by contrast with sensations, mental images are simply direct and vivid ways of conceiving qualities. That is, he denies that a red image actually has the sensory quality of redness which he thinks that a sensation of redness does have. I believe that he should push his scepticism a little further and make sensations conceptual also.

Foster's argument up to this point is not an easy one. But now it becomes even harder to follow. He has claimed to establish that we have no better than a topic-neutral conception of the physical. He wants to advance to the conclusion, that the physical world cannot be an ultimate reality. Ultimate reality, he argues, is wholly non-physical.

He tries to establish two principles.

The first is principle of variability: the physical geometry of a world is logically determined by the natural laws governing the underlying reality which constitutes that world. It is a principle of variability because the laws obeyed by reality are "different in different possible worlds". The second principle is a principle of constancy: the physical geometry of a space is essential to its nature and never "differs in different possible worlds". The conclusion from these two premises is that a spatial world (and so a material world) cannot be the underlying reality.

Concerning the first principle, it is an interesting idea that the spatial order is fundamentally a causal or lawlike order. Foster tries to prove it rigorously by an ingenious and complex argument. He requires as one premise his previous conclusion that our concept of the physical is topic-neutral. To get a principle of variability he requires the assumption that the laws of reality are contingent, that they differ from possible world to world. This assumption is not universally accepted by philosophers.

To support the principle of constancy, however, Foster argues for a necessity. It used to be thought that it could be perceived *a priori* that space is necessarily, or essentially, Euclidean in nature. The discovery of the possibility of non-Euclidean geometries changed that. It is now recognized that the nature of space has to be discovered *a posteriori*, by experience. Recently, however, Saul Kripke has argued that some truths, although discoverable only *a posteriori*, must nevertheless be accounted necessary, not contingent. It is this (rather controversial) doctrine that Foster relies upon to support his contention that whatever geometry a space has is essentially.

Foster now has his conclusion that the physical world cannot be ultimately real. One might still think that there is an "external" reality which causes our sense-experience, an external reality of which the physical world is some sort of representation or encoding. Given Foster's earlier arguments, this reality is likely to be mental.

Foster has no quarrel with the idea that there is an external reality, probably mental, which causes our experience. But he does deny that it is at all likely that the physical world systematically represents that reality. The Physical world, he argues, is nothing but the logical product of facts about human experience.

It was at this point that I finally failed to grasp his argument. It has something to do with the alleged fact that, given his previous argument, we must assume that the laws of the physical world are in a certain specific sense uniform, while lacking any assurance that anything external to our experience obeys such laws. But the details escaped me. At any rate, Foster has reached his idealist conclusion.

In a final part, Foster engages to construct a time-order for the finite, experiencing, selves who are the only ultimate contingent reality. He begins with phenomenal time, the time-order in our sensations. From this he constructs something called stream time, and from this subjective time-order the time-order of experience and other mental events in the life of a single subject. From subjective time he goes to intersubjective time, the time-order of everybody's experience. This is not not physical time, but he constructs that too. The main cement used to create these successively more sophisticated orderings is causal relation.

Foster is a philosopher who thinks for himself and that is certainly admirable. When I started the book I thought that it was clear, although difficult, and excessively technical. I cannot believe that the technicalities are really necessary. At least they should be in notes and appendices. As for the difficulty, I thought that Foster might plead not too impudently that this is forced upon him by the difficulty of the issues which he is considering. But as the argument went on, a structure over lengthening, he difficulty became insupportable. It disappears so far into his own argument that he cannot be followed.

MEDIEVAL HISTORY

Prosperous and brisk

R. B. Dobson

ROBERT S. GOTTFRIED

Bury St Edmunds and the Urban Crisis: 1290-1339
313pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £19.40.
0 691 05340 5

As Thomas Carlyle pointed out as long ago as 1843 there are few places in England more capable of provoking illuminating reflections about the differences between medieval past and modern present than Bury St Edmunds, that "prosperous brisk town beautifully diversifying the general grassy face of Suffolk". Thanks to the incomparably vivid chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, the abbey and town of Bury St Edmunds in the time of Abbot Samson (1182-1211) will always be the single most important place of sedentary pilgrimage for those who wish to remember that medieval English communities "were not peopled with phantoms but with men of flesh and blood, made altogether as we are".

The Bury St Edmunds of the later Middle Ages, despite the scholarly attention it has long received at the hands of Mary Lobel and many local antiquaries, is a good deal more difficult to rescue from oblivion. All the more welcome therefore is Robert Gottfried's energetic and enterprising attempt to reconstruct the social and economic life of this important East Anglian town from the late thirteenth century to the Dissolution in 1539 of the great Benedictine monastery which first made it famous. Comparatively fresh from his recent foray into the contentious battleground of fifteenth-century English plague and population problems, Professor Gottfried is equally free from inhibitions in entering the currently no less hotly disputed world of the late medieval town. The result is a vigorous and wide-ranging exposition of the view that in the later Middle Ages the town of Bury St Edmunds enjoyed a remarkable "economic boom", a boom whose most distinctive characteristics were its prominence as the most important textile marketing centre in west Suffolk, the increased wealth and political power of its borough elite and the reduction of the abbot of Bury St Edmunds himself to the status of a "jaded doorman" long before his final suppression.

As detailed modern studies of individual English towns are still so comparatively few in number, no book with such a message can afford to be ignored by urban historians, even if they agree with Gottfried himself that the buoyant fortunes of late medieval Bury St Edmunds were untypical of those usually experienced elsewhere. Certainly there could be no more pertinent contrast, as the author shows himself well aware, between this optimistic account of urban efflorescence and the infinitely more melancholy account of late medieval Coventry provided by Charles Poythian-Adams in the last substantial contribution to the present debate on the so-called late medieval urban crisis. All allowances having been made for the vast dissimilarities between these two boroughs and their surviving documentation, the precise degree of urban prosperity or decay in most late medieval English towns still lies, to a quite uncomfortable degree, in the eye of the beholder. It accordingly seems all the more courageous of Gottfried to present his own study as the product of an "entirely new approach to the study of history, the result of the perfection of new tools and techniques of analysis and catalogue". Readers of that challenging statement will be all the more surprised to encounter the central paradox of this study: despite its many statistical tables and its many maps, this is in some ways one of the most impressionistic and subjective accounts of a late medieval English town to have been written.

Such criticism does not of course undermine the general plausibility of Gottfried's conclusions advanced by him in the course of his strenuous attempt to wrest long-term significance out of often intrinsically unimportant sources. Moreover his book

must clearly be read by the scores of English historians at present confronting similar problems of deciding how far one can safely apply modern statistical techniques to urban archives. Particularly instructive in this respect, as it is central to his interpretation of the economic fortunes of late medieval Bury, is Gottfried's survey of "The Demographic Basis for Change". Whatever one may think of the remarkable aplomb with which the author constructs tables of male and female replacement ratios on the basis of testamentary evidence, he certainly convinces us that Bury St Edmunds conforms to the typical pre-industrial urban syndrome of being incapable of natural self-regeneration and accordingly heavily dependent upon immigration from its surrounding hinterland.

Much less happy is the guess (in effect little more) that on the evidence of the West Suffolk muster returns the gross population of Bury St Edmunds can be estimated at 5,438 in 1522 as compared with 4,200 at the time of the first poll-tax in 1377. On this occasion, Gottfried commendably concedes that "my system is rather haphazard", an admission which makes it all the more worth noting that by the closing pages of his book he has convinced himself that "Bury's population continued to rise", a phenomenon for which there seems no clear evidence whatsoever. For the first time, advocates of late medieval urban prosperity might find it easier to argue their case if they emancipated themselves from the view that a wealthy town necessarily had to be a populous town.

Much more compelling, and certainly one of the most thought-provoking sections of this monograph, is the use of sacrist's rentals and other sources to show that late medieval Bury seems to have undergone a topographical revolution whereby the older and more central parts of the town increasingly suffered from "urban blight" at exactly the time when the most flourishing areas of settlement moved to the "corners" and the "periphery". Even more informative is Gottfried's biographical investigation of the small group of wealthy men who dominated social and economic life in late medieval Bury, an investigation which cannot however be said to lead to altogether unambiguous support for the general thesis of his book. The fact that "the single largest personal fortune in the history of the late medieval town" should belong to Sir Robert Drury, Speaker of the Commons and Privy Counsellor to Henry VIII, is self-evidently a testimony to the wealth attainable by the Suffolk gentry rather than by the burghers of Bury itself.

Indeed the prevailing impression left by this study is that the prosperity of Bury St Edmunds was the result less of notable initiatives on the part of its inhabitants than of its good fortune in being located in the centre of a particularly active cloth-producing area. In its important discussion of how Bury profited as the principal regional market for the textile villages along the Stour, and how its merchants withstood competition from those of Ipswich and King's Lynn, this is a work which in the last resort does more to support than to deny Poythian-Adams's hypothesis that by the end of the Middle Ages the only successful English towns were those which "looked outwards". Nor is it by any means as certain as Gottfried would have us believe that the monks of St Edmund had cause for serious alarm at these developments: it seems extremely unlikely that the future historians of the late medieval abbey will be content with the somewhat over-simplified contrast between a flourishing town and an allegedly chronically insolvent abbey continuously presented throughout this book.

More likely to stand the test of time is Gottfried's lively account of social and religious activity within a chapter somewhat misleadingly entitled "The Extent and Division of Burghal Corporate Power". Even here, however, the reader's confidence can sometimes be shaken. A lengthy discussion of the so-called "medical community" in Bury certainly lends support to those who believe that it was in the provincial towns of late medieval England that the foundations of modern general medical practice were originally laid; but it can certainly do no service to that argument to identify as an "East Anglian physician" the comparatively well-known Henry Rude, Doctor of Canon Law and ecclesiastical administrator, on the grounds that he appears in the records as "master doctor". Here and elsewhere one suspects that a somewhat less lively approach to the evidential problems, and to the writing of this study might have made it more impressive than it already is. Would the inhabitants of late medieval Bury have altogether recognized themselves amidst this enthusiastic portrayal of "quite well heeled merchants", of Benedictine monks "ever strapped for cash" and of craftsmen "weaving a bit on the side"?

"Truly it is no easy matter", to quote Carlyle for the last time, "to get across the chasm of Seven Centuries filled with such material." Professor Gottfried's stimulating study is a salutary reminder that (dare one say?) the use of the computer makes bridging that chasm a more, rather than less, hazardous venture than it ever was.

Holy Saturday

to plainsong, mode III

Walking through St Mary's churchyard with the washing I can hear from the windows *Pange lingua* gurgling down the twilight air as the organist rehearses for the high day of the year.

I have seen the sullen faces in the all-night laundrette dark eyes fixed upon the windows where the sun will never set though the world is turning, turning it will not be whiter yet.

He will ransom us tomorrow he whom yesterday we sold for the children of the promise silver shall be turned to gold but today we work in darkness smoothing linen fold by fold.

Keith Bosley

Predominantly foreign

Edward Miller

T. H. LLOYD

Allen Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages
253pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95.
0 312 01856 8

Historians of English commerce enjoy an advantage shared by few other students of the medieval economy: consistently, from 1275 onwards, at least some branches of overseas trade were subjected to customs duties, the collection of which left behind records which have been preserved in the archives of the exchequer. Those records can be manipulated in order to provide quantitative assessments of complete branches of trade on a national scale, something that is not possible in other areas of economic activity at that time. The customs accounts, therefore, have been much exploited by historians. Half a century ago a small band of scholars assembled by Eileen Power and M. M. Postan relied mainly upon them for their studies of English trade in the fifteenth century, and more recently E. M. Carrus-Wilson and M. K. Jones have used them to establish definitively the dimensions of the English wool, cloth and wine trades during the later Middle Ages. Now they have also provided the principal body of evidence upon which T. H. Lloyd's *Allen Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* is based.

Lloyd's title calls for a word of explanation. His "High Middle Ages" are not the early centuries which the French call *le haut moyen âge* and they are rather more restricted than the German *Hochmittelalter*. His main emphasis falls upon the period 1303-36, which opened with Edward I's success in securing differential import and export duties from the foreign merchants trading to England and whom he married, and the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War which, in a variety of ways, altered the context in which all merchants operated. The new alien duties, although they were discontinued during the middle years of Edward II's reign, generated for the years 1303-11 and 1322-36 two sets of records that are invaluable to historians of commerce. First, there is a more or less continuous series of summary accounts, part by port, which enables a figure to be put upon the number of standard cloths and the value of general merchandise imported and exported by foreign merchants; the hundredweights of wax they imported and how many sacks of wool and lasts of hides they exported. Lloyd summarizes these data in an appendix of tables which only exclude, for reasons which he justifies, one principal branch of the alien trade: the substantial imports of wine they brought in, mainly from Gascony. Second, for most ports, "particular accounts" have survived, although much more sporadically, listing imports and exports in somewhat varying detail, ship by ship, and according to the merchant consigning them. They afford a picture of the structure as well as of the dimensions of the trade by foreigners in the English

ports. At the same time the records of the "new custom" paid by aliens begin at a time when, in some sectors of trade, their predominance was being undermined. The boom in wool exports in the first decade of the fourteenth century seems to have been English-led; the English share in the wool trade, the new maritime trade to Italy excepted, continued to grow. Before 1336 Englishmen dominated the Gascon wine trade; and they may also have been mainly responsible for a slow revival of textile exports. This relative growth of native trade was still on a very narrow front, for English merchants probably played a modest role in the Baltic, took little part in the Iberian trade and ventured not at all to the Mediterranean. Indeed, the English break-out from a trade basically focused on the nearer Continental lands had to await the age of the Renaissance. On the other hand, the significance of the relative gains of alien commerce in this period should not be belittled. Lloyd's explanation of this trend is brief but convincing: the fact that the foreigner paid heavier duties played its part, but probably more important were a whole diversity of political circumstances and government policies which were turned against (or to the exploitation of) the alien merchant. The sorry tale of the bankruptcy of Italian companies, from the Riccardi in the 1290s to the Bardi and Peruzzi in the 1340s, was in no small measure an English responsibility. After the latter years of the thirteenth century, English merchants stepped into the place, so long occupied by Italians, as bankers to the Crown; and possibly at no earlier period would they have disposed of the resources to undertake that responsibility. *Allen Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* also furnishes the background of the developing capacity of denizens which became evident in the mid-fourteenth century.

The value of this study does not depend solely upon the fact that Lloyd, for the first time, has used the whole range of evidence provided by the customs (and of course much more) for every branch of the alien trade. In many respects his point of departure is in the reign of Edward I, when foreign merchants dominated English trade, including the export of English wool across the North Sea and the return traffic in cloth from Flemish looms and luxury goods from the entrepôts of the Low Countries and Champagne. If all the indications point to a notable expansion of English trade in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, most of them suggest that foreigners played a principal part in that expansion, with Flemings and, later, Italians in the leading roles, but with a diverse supporting cast of Colognians, Norwegians, Brabantians, Normans, Cahorsins, Gascons and Spaniards, and with Baltic Germans becoming increasingly prominent as the thirteenth century progressed. Foreign merchants, moreover, were not only to be found on the sea-ways between England and a wider world, but also in London, where a London tallage roll of 1304 which shows Vintry ward to be full of Gascons and Dowgate well populated by Germans, while resident representatives of the Italian merchant companies were scattered through the heart of the city. In these respects London was not totally exceptional. Germans had establishments at Boston and King's Lynn as well as in the London Steelyard; at Newcastle there were resident Picards and an Italian merchant trading to England, a local whom he married, and a foreigner, the *Chorazin*, William Servat, who settled in London, sold wine as far away as Durham. This was a time when the history of alien merchants was central to the economic history of England.

At the same time the records of the "new custom" paid by aliens begin at a time when, in some sectors of trade, their predominance was being undermined. The boom in wool exports in the first decade of the fourteenth century seems to have been English-led; the English share in the wool trade, the new maritime trade to Italy excepted, continued to grow. Before 1336 Englishmen dominated the Gascon wine trade; and they may also have been mainly responsible for a slow revival of textile exports. This relative growth of native trade was still on a very narrow front, for English merchants probably played a modest role in the Baltic, took little part in the Iberian trade and ventured not at all to the Mediterranean. Indeed, the English break-out from a trade basically focused on the nearer Continental lands had to await the age of the Renaissance. On the other hand, the significance of the relative gains of alien commerce in this period should not be belittled. Lloyd's explanation of this trend is brief but convincing: the fact that the foreigner paid heavier duties played its part, but probably more important were a whole diversity of political circumstances and government policies which were turned against (or to the exploitation of) the alien merchant. The sorry tale of the bankruptcy of Italian companies, from the Riccardi in the 1290s to the Bardi and Peruzzi in the 1340s, was in no small measure an English responsibility. After the latter years of the thirteenth century, English merchants stepped into the place, so long occupied by Italians, as bankers to the Crown; and possibly at no earlier period would they have disposed of the resources to undertake that responsibility. *Allen Merchants in England in the High Middle Ages* also furnishes the background of the developing capacity of denizens which became evident in the mid-fourteenth century.

The customs accounts, of course, have defects from the point of view of the historian. They may understate the volume of commerce since these duties, like any other taxes, were evaded or avoided if that was possible. Their purpose, too, was to make clear the liabilities of the collectors rather than the details of trading, so that the information they afford is not always strictly comparable with the later years of the same port at different times. In consequence, when they are used to measure the levels of trading activity, "the findings will often be very rough and ready"; but all students of the period will be grateful for Lloyd's determination to put them precisely to this use. In addition to measuring the pattern of alien trade in the first third of the fourteenth century, moreover, he provides it with a context and a background. He begins with a review of the position of foreign merchants in England as it was affected by public policy from the twelfth century onwards, and the specific changes in the status of the alien trade in the reigns of Henry II, Richard I and John.

For the details of his argument, however, Foster is more beholden to Berkeley. Our conceptual fix upon the physical is gained purely through the sensible qualities: seen colours, smelled smells, seen and felt spatial relations, and so on. The sensible qualities, however, are mind dependent: they are qualities of our sensations. If the physical lies beyond the sensible qualities, then we have no concrete knowledge of the nature of the physical. The physical might be mental. Indeed, if it is not mental, then it is no more than "something we know not what", which plays a certain causal role.

This is not the end of Foster's argument. Indeed it is only its first step. But it is a crucial step. I am inclined to think that it is taken too easily. Chapter Six, "The Confinement of Qualia", is the critical point. Here, it seems to me, Foster fails to take seriously enough the position of the Direct Realist about perception. A Direct Realist holds that the sensible qualities and relations are objective qualities and relations of physical existents. These qualities and relations may, and presumably do, exist in complete independence of the minds which perceive them.

Foster takes the view that when somebody has a sensation of red, he is veridical, illusory or hallucinatory; then the sensible quality of redness actually exists. However, we do not sense a red sense-datum: he rejects an act/object datum. Rather, the sensation is an instance of (sensible) redness, and because sensations are mental, sensible redness is a mental quality.

Schools for young Republicans

Tony Judt

KATHERINE AUSPITZ

The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'Enseignement and the origins of the Third Republic 1866-1885
237pp. Cambridge University Press.
£22.50.
0 521 23861 7

There was a time when history was a respected branch of moral philosophy. Then, for an important moment in the European experience, it became pedagogy. More recently, in headlong retreat from such demanding identities, it has taken refuge in the social sciences. We are all social historians now – or, more precisely, we are all French social historians now, even those who have no professional interest whatsoever in things French.

Unsurprisingly, the sharpest impact of the generation-long hegemony of French social history (an overlong *durée* in its own right) has been on writing about France, no less predictably, the by now traditional French concern with narrative and chronology has been most enthusiastically emulated by English-language historians of France. It is thus genuinely refreshing to read an unfashionable subject from one of the latter, and this would be the case even if Katherine Auspitz's book on the origins of the French Third Republic were not as good as it is.

Professor Auspitz has a misleadingly simple theme: the educational societies of the last years of the Second Empire, their organization and aims and the role played by their members in the establishment of the political system of Republican France after 1877. Her point, simply put, is that these societies and the social thinking they embodied and promoted came to form the skeleton of the political class that dominated French public life into the 1930s. Without the broad and respectable network provided by the movement for free, compulsory and laic primary education, members of which provided fully one-third of the parliamentary *députés* in 1895, 1870 would have gone the way of 1848.

This doesn't sound very startling. If it comes as news that the education issue truly mattered to early Third Republic politicians and their supporters, this can only be because it got forgotten in the rush to find something altogether different to say about the emergence of modern France. Auspitz has some withering asides on historians who have found it

convenient, or merely witty, to reduce the anti-clerical Radicals to instruments of an emergent capitalism (Sanford Elwitt) or to sneer at the intellectual inadequacy and political irrelevance of their beliefs (Theodore Zeldin). She charges them at the very least with an unsympathetic anachronism (which is a pretty devastating accusation if you happen to take history seriously), and she makes the charge stick.

What this book makes especially clear, through its concentration on the formation of a Republican opposition under Louis Napoléon, is just how important is the development during the Second Empire of a new political outlook and an altered conception of political conflict. The advantage of readdressing our sights to take in the 1860s is not simply that this offers a better explanation of later matters such as the Commune or political Radicalism; it also provides a handle for grasping the oddly disembodied, free-floating political culture of Republican France. It becomes clear that the Third Republic was not born by accident, and did not acquire its constitutional structure by misadventure, but that it was, in context, a very rational and successful solution to a peculiarly French circumstance – a political circumstance, identified as such by the worried Republican opponents of Bonapartism.

The solution to the political problem was seen as simultaneously social and intellectual (political solutions as such were precluded by the very nature of the Imperial régime – an important circumstantial consideration), hence the emphasis on nationwide secular education and hence, too, Auspitz's intelligent concern with Durkheim, rather than the étioilated Alain, as the Radical theorist. The dullist provincial radical, provided only that he came to maturity during the later years of Louis Napoléon (as most of them did), could work out for himself the political cost of the anomic society.

Necessarily, then, Auspitz is concerned with a particular generation of radical Republicans. Her protagonists are the assorted Jules (Ferry, Grévy, etc), Félix Faure, Sadi Carnot, Léon Say and Léon Bourgeois and their contemporaries. Over time, and by 1900 at the latest, these men were anything but "radicals" – most of them went on to become presidents or prime ministers of France. There is perhaps something of a trifle counter-intuitive about all this. The high years of political radicalism in France, dating from the formation of a Radical Party in 1901 and lasting through the 1930s, offer better material to more

conventional accounts, of interminable parliamentary *attentisme*, of ministerial reshuffles and Edouard Herriot ("le discrédit lyonnais"). Perhaps the book manages to say something refreshing about French Radicalism by avoiding any engagement with the subject as conventionally conceived (by 1885 most of Auspitz's radical bourgeois were Opportunists or Moderates, in the political vocabulary of the period). It is also true that the very Radical successes of 1902-06, in completing the separation of Church from State and establishing final and complete control over the education of children, rather undermined political Radicalism by depriving it of a programme.

Nevertheless, it remains inconveniently the case that the régime of Vichy focused obsessively and at considerable expense upon the effort to reverse the legislation on schools and religion. Unless we choose to dismiss much of contemporary French history as a series of illusory, quixotic conflicts over irrationally held myths (and in the name of what metahistorical rationality are we to undertake such a dismissal?), it must be conceded to Professor Auspitz that hers is the wiser intuition.

This said, transgressing fashion is not a risk-free business. Auspitz's sources for the character of the 1851

uprising are a century out of date (this is carrying academic unconventionality to unnecessary extremes). To evince apparent ignorance of the relevant work of Agulhon, Vigier, Margadant and many others, is to weaken the case that the author builds for the centrality of the Imperial decades in modern French history. Pace Auspitz, December 1851 saw a widespread provincial uprising in defence of variously understood Republican beliefs – without which background it is difficult to see how the Ligue de l'Enseignement could ever have established such deep roots, and apparently in just those areas which saw most activity in the dying Second Republic. The author would have been further sustained in her opinions (not that these ever really go understated) by a reading of the characteristically expansive thesis of Raymond Huard, who comes to very similar conclusions from quite different premises and a regional perspective.

Lastly, Auspitz is altogether too old-fashioned in her occasional comments upon women in her period. I pass over the reference on page 3 to "all citizens, peasants, workers and women, as well as bourgeois men", although its taxonomic function escapes me. More immediately pertinent to her argument, however, is her rejection of Zeldin's contention that the Church in France helped to liberate women from

male domination. Stated thus it is a course nonsense – as Auspitz points out and as Zeldin anyway considers anyway were priests not men? But Church, in its social capacity, provides a "space" that was increasingly used as the Republic progressed. This development was not unrelated to an exclusively male character of the bar, the *cabaret*, the political society, the trade union, the political party (left no less than right). As a result it became possible for Radical organized religion and political conservatism in France, his enfranchised women might move a time of crisis and chaos, and thus seeking in commitment to a "faith" (communism or Catholicism) the lost order and stability of childhood. Summary, however, bedevils the book. Only the works of the 1930s are discussed, giving a curiously truncated impression of the commitment of may well be arguable that Auden's sophisticated individuality distinguishes him from "the dull mass of Communists" but some of that dull mass died in Spain for their unsophisticated, non-individualistic beliefs.

Essentially Johnstone's selection concentrates on the men Gibbon described as "wee chaps without chins" (the first decade of the century) and type of education (public school). Unfortunately this selection is justified on neither polemical nor enthusiastic grounds. There is a great deal of hedging and ditching in the argument. Cases are constructed and thrown over, reservations made, generalizations re-introduced, and any clear position lost in a welter of counter-assertions. Contradictions and paradoxes are discerned in each writer, but also abound in the discussion itself. Johnstone attacks Orwell for condemning conversion as the act of a child unable to face an adult world, yet his own account of Greene's conversion is couched in the same terms. Orwell is also criticized for accepting the definition of religion-as-crutch. But the idea that only an alienated or sick self could take to religion, and that ideology is only a psychological support, is a very English view which underlies the whole book. (Green and Waugh, for example, are described as using religion as a safety-net against despair.) Johnstone writes interestingly about the anti-intellectual bias of the Auden generation, but is guilty of the same bias himself. Much

Wee chaps without chins

Judie Newman

RICHARD JOHNSTONE

The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen-thirties
141pp. Oxford University Press.
£9.50.
0 19 211779 3

On the jacket the late Philip Toynbee describes Richard Johnstone's book as "the best summing up of these particular writers that I have read". The writers in question (Upward, Warner, Greene, Waugh, Isherwood, Orwell) are considered as publishing in a time of crisis and chaos, and thus seeking in commitment to a "faith" (communism or Catholicism) the lost order and stability of childhood. Summary, however, bedevils the book. Only the works of the 1930s are discussed, giving a curiously truncated impression of the commitment of may well be arguable that Auden's sophisticated individuality distinguishes him from "the dull mass of Communists" but some of that dull mass died in Spain for their unsophisticated, non-individualistic beliefs.

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None of this would matter if the book had the virtues of an elegant thesis, polemical thrust or even idiosyncratic enthusiasm. There is, however, an imbalance in Johnstone's selection. Communism gripped the literary imagination in the 1930s, while Catholicism was the less popular alternative. Only one chapter, however, really considers socialist writers, and then on rather exclusive grounds. Johnstone divides the socialist novelists into three groups: the proletarian novel, the socialist romance and the novel of specific social commitment. The socialist novel is given short shrift, rejected after a brief glance at one example. The proletarian novel is also briskly excluded, on the grounds that the committed writer was drawn to his both as a form of individual self-validation. Thus both Walter Green-

wood and Lewis Grassie Gibbon are written off as failing to point to the need for political action, for containing the seeds of conservatism and for creating characters whose primary aim is to achieve a more favourable relation to the status quo. Johnstone rightly underlines the difference between the proletarian and the committed novel. The former recognizes a gap between social action and personal gratification, whereas the latter sees revolutionary commitment and the desire for personal fulfilment as interdependent. But for some readers this is precisely where the proletarian novel scores. The vast panorama of Gibbon's *A Scots Quair* excels in the sense conveyed of the entropic force of change, of the waste and sacrifice involved in political action. Johnstone's belief that his chosen writers sought to reassert the strength of the individual through the medium of belief, rather than subsuming their personalities and art to a cause, comes dangerously close to radical chic. It may well be arguable that Auden's sophisticated individuality distinguishes him from "the dull mass of Communists" but some of that dull mass died in Spain for their unsophisticated, non-individualistic beliefs.

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effort is expended to prove that conversions were emotional rather than intellectual. Upward's real evidence of covert conversion is discounted as merely a function of a deeper emotional commitment. Greene and Waugh made similar claims to intellectual conversion, but Johnstone simply sees them as using rationality to take out insurance on their faith. (An intellectual belief is supposedly not as subject to later disillusion.) While we are all sensitive to the need to trust the tale rather than the teller, Johnstone's approach to his writers' own statements seems to impugn pathological dishonesty to their motives. He describes Waugh's claims as disingenuous, and Greene's childhood memories as contrived. There is a tide of creeping psychologism here which is not sufficiently held in check. Orwell, of course, did not convert at all, and is therefore rather out of place in this

context. Johnstone solves this problem by the old dodge of arguing that vehement dislike of anything is evidence of covert conversion. Excluded as a boy from a superior group, Orwell's distaste for "later groupings is therefore related to the politics of envy, and an emotional reaction. Except in the case of Isherwood, however, Johnstone is distinctly coy about other emotional commitments of the 1930s, a period Julian Symonds described as the "homosexual decade".

The chapters on Isherwood, Upward and Warner are nevertheless the best in the book. Johnstone's desire to highlight contradictions makes for a balanced and informative reading, with an attractive emphasis on the exploratory rather than the dogmatic qualities of their prose. The more

stylized writers fare less well. Comedy and commitment are unhappy bedfellows, and the readings of Waugh and Orwell suffer as a result. The idea that Waugh (in *Decline and Fall*) concentrates his values in a vitalistic elite speedily elides with the notion of a spiritual elite. Margot Beste-Chetwynde fits this mould most uncomfortably, and Captain Grimes not at all. (Nothing is made of Grimes's undoubted vitalism which spends itself on the youthful Clutterbuck in a decidedly non-spiritual fashion.) Subtleties of tone are also neglected in the discussion of *Brighion Rock*, which is dismissed along with *Brideshead Revisited* as sentimental. While the reader may not want the assertions of priest or commissar to go unchallenged, he is likely to finish this book with the sensation that nothing of much value came out of the 1930s.

More than just sad

Rupert Christiansen

WIRT WILLIAMS

The Tragic Art of Ernest Hemingway
240pp. Louisiana State University Press. £10.80.
0 8071 0884 7

The Tragic Art of Ernest Hemingway is a classic example of American criticism at its most exhaustive and literal. Based on the already thorough work of Carlos Baker, it aims to establish Hemingway as "one of the century's greatest makers of tragedy" and marshals models from Aristotle, Hegel and Sartre to prove its case (*Oedipus Rex* is engagingly referred to as *Res*). "Protagonists in confrontation with an overwhelming universe... irreversible catastrophe... spiritual transcendence" – no implication of the claim is avoided. Wirt Williams admits that some of the short stories are "subtragic" or "not-quite-tragic", but the major works are carefully classified within a rigorous definition of the genre. *The Sun Also Rises* is a tragedy of passive acceptance. *A Farewell to Arms* is a catastrophe of fate. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a tragedy of choice, while *The Old Man and the Sea* moves towards a Christian ethos.

The basic problem is that this re-moves Hemingway to a level of pussy-footing literary discourse and

awareness that he avoided and deplored. Hemingway's perception of tragedy was ordinary, rooted in the cussed ironies of life and the virtue of stoicism in face of it. *To Have and Have Not's* tragic revelation is Morgan's cry, "A man alone ain't got no bloody f— chance"; *A Farewell to Arms* has a love-death pathos worthy of Puccini; but what Williams does is to impose a formal aesthetic patterning on what Hemingway kept contingent, understated and sometimes inarticulate – his attitude to tragedy best summed up by his remark to Scott Fitzgerald that *The Sun Also Rises* was "one hell of a sad story". This was not a defensive naïveté – the recently published letters show him ready to acknowledge stylistic debts to Pound, Stein, Flaubert and Turgeniev.

Writing for Hemingway was a masculine activity, a sporting challenge, like big game or bulls. The firm, clean lines of adventure story – Heming if you like it, *Boys Out of Paper* if not – and the masculine ethics of courage, honour and physical endurance dominate his fiction. Such economy of means may

lead, as the young Henry James remarked to economy of ends, but Williams has inflated the ends without even considering the means. He adds nothing to Hemingway's status by ignoring its limitations of intention. "There isn't any symbolism," Hemingway wrote to Bernard Berenson of *The Old Man and the Sea*: "The sea is the sea. The Old Man is an old man." Williams casts even the black wrestler as Faulkner and the turtles as hack journalism.

The other critical theme of this book is a musical analogy. Picking up virtually nothing more than Hemingway's childhood competence on the cello, Williams proposes the profound influence of Sonata Form and Counterpoint – two characters become "opposing keys in the fugue structure", a narrative line becomes a "melody", and a change of scene an "alteration of key". Any work of literature which contains elements of contrast and development could be analysed in such a vocabulary, and its persistence here is quite exasperating.

Copy-book reading

John Adlard

KRISTIN BRADY

The Short Stories of Thomas Hardy: Tales of Past and Present
235pp. Macmillan. £17.50.
0 333 31531 6

It has often been lamented of late that Hardy's short stories are neglected. Now Kristin Brady, in a comprehensive study, has done her best to remedy this. In four long chapters she surveys the development of Hardy's concept of the short story between 1863 and 1900.

She sees *Wessex Tales* as "pastoral histories" – like Shakespeare's characters retiring into the forest to return with a new vision, we the readers, enter a Wessex, that is, actually a dream state, which distils from the limited and actual history of Dorset what is perennially and essentially true. There is less reliance on tradition and more on the printed page in the stories of *A Group of Noble Dames*. These she calls "ambivalent exempla": they present moral situations; they are ambivalent because none embodies an all-embracing truth, and because there is a contradiction between the response of the reader and that of the narrator, the "convention-bound" members of an antiquarian club. She describes *Life's Little Ironies* as "tragedies of circumstance"; these tales deal with frustrations and disasters they bring, especially to women.

Every story is conscientiously analysed. Occasionally the analysis is unsatisfactory. In "On the Western Circuit" Charles Ray's summary has an "obvious" symbolism for Professor

Brady, despite that final "e", though nothing in the text supports this; yet she ignores that aptly named "pleasure-machine" on which Arian rises and falls in mindless ecstasy, in the company of many fellow-creatures the duration of whose pleasure depends on the whim of the "inexorable stoker". In "An Imaginative Woman" she might have noted further irony in the contempt plainly shown for Robert Trewe and his poetry by the narrator, as well as the critics in the story, and the evidence that, in the unlikely event of her marrying him, Ella would have found him as self-absorbed and insensitive a husband as Marchmill.

Brady is aware that the stories have suffered not only neglect but also a fair amount of scorn. Joyce deplored their "copy-book talk". John Berryman called them "the worst short stories that the world has ever seen". Springing to their defence, Brady makes claims for them that cannot be justified. "Ambivalent exempla" is a phrase that dignifies the tales in *A Group of Noble Dames* far beyond their deserts; they are really only a "good light read", full of improbabilities and mellow/ambivalent absurdities, while the bridge-passages introducing the Club are brief and perfunctory.

As she admits, Hardy in *Life's Little Ironies* presents "familiar scenarios, mostly of the sort found in current sentimental fiction", and the fact that he defies our expectations "by altering or inverting the morals of these plots" still leaves us to digest as best we may a standard magazine story with its "copy-book talk". Hardy, Professor Brady tells us, wrote stories "as original in form and style as the stories of a Chekhov, a Joyce, or a Hemingway". This sounds more like propagandizing than the exercise of literary judgment.

From frustration to fantasy

Eugen Weber

STEPHEN WILSON

Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair
812pp. Associated University Presses. £25.
0 8386 3037 5

A specially trained torturer should first of all cut off their eyelids with a pair of scissors... poisonous spiders will be put in the half-shells of walnuts, placed on their eyes, and securely fixed by strings tied round their heads. The hungry spiders... will then grow slowly through the cornea and into the eye, until nothing is left in the blind sockets.

This is what *l'Intransigeant* of October 18, 1898, suggested, under the pen of Henri Rochefort, for the magistrates of the Criminal Chamber of the Cour de Cassation, supposedly favourable to a revision of the Dreyfus Case. If this was the way to treat alleged Christian supporters of a "Jewish" cause, what could be left for the Jews? Stephen Wilson addresses that and other questions in 578 pages of dense text, 164 pages of notes, and a further seventy pages of assorted aids, including an excellent index: a *thèse* on the grand scale, worthy of the French intellect. Appropriately enough, when his treatment leaves little doubt that anti-semitism is as traditionally French as a *bûche-frites*.

He does not, thank goodness, give us another recounting of the Dreyfus Affair, but uses its turmoil to illuminate the anti-semitic paroxysms of the 1890s, in the more general context of the anti-semitic movement in France and in Algeria, which he examines under a number of headings: economic, social, (and socialist), nationalistic, racial, religious, and sexual. In which the anti-semitic "seems to be projecting his own self-characteristics on the mythical Jew." The quotation from Rochefort comes from the "sexual" chapter. With this is a very intelligent book, judicious, thoughtful, and unpretentious to the point of overabundance.

As an active member of the all-but-the-kitchen-sink school, I hesitate to say that Wilson gives us a bit much; but the fact is that the accumulation of quotations used to drive each point irresistibly awakes an almost irresistible desire to skip. Those who read such unwieldy thoughts will find both text and notes full of information. Particularly rewarding are the chapters that provide detailed studies of French opinion of the anti-semitic

riots of 1898 which others had ignored; of the nationalist contributions honouring the memory of the forger, Henry, and their complot of practical suggestions about what might be done to Jews: vivisection, dissect, drown, castrate, put out eyes, crush to a pulp with blueglasses, nail to wall or cross, boil in acid bath, burn at stake or in glass furnaces (a local touch from Baccarat), skin and then bind books with, or turn into bedside rugs to tread on (from a priest). A dismal litany of wishes to be fulfilled half a century later, of repressed violence and aggression temporarily condemned to verbal expression only.

What really interests Wilson, however, is the social function of anti-semitism, what makes anti-semites in a particular time and place. His careful treatment confirms the many possible elements of an over-determined phenomenon, but his argument concentrates on the *fin-de-siècle* reaction to "modernization" and to rapid social change which many perceived as decadence. He also emphasizes the rise of the popular press serving newly – and barely – literate masses receptive to simplistic explanations of complex problems. Talented publicists like Drumont, and a host of less talented ones, articulated relatively unstructured bigotries into a coherent ideology appropriate to emergent democracy and political organizations. They were able to draw on traditional prejudices and stereotypes of a diffuse kind, easily taken for granted and seldom if ever examined, to recruit an audience for more specific and virulent doctrines.

Wilson's work fits particularly well with Michael Marcus's *Politics of Assimilation*, whose study of the French Jewish community is now complemented by an investigation of their anti-semitic foes, and with the more recent publications of Sternhell and Marcus-Paxton, for which the present book provides both an introduction and a crucial confirmation. It can be recommended to all serious scholars as required reading in fields crowded with more dispensable works.

This being said, let me take mild issue on a few questions of detail. Anti-semitic teachers may well have been more than "a small minority in their profession," as Wilson suggests; and his impression could reflect a version of history written by the victors, which neither party had the interest to deny. I incline rather to the contrary view: experience of Genardine de Bévotte and the University faculties of Dijon to be anti-Dreyfus almost to a man, and only three professors in all the

lycée of Versailles who believed Dreyfus innocent.

The relationship established between hard times and anti-semitic manifestations is convincing. It makes one wish for local identification on a scale which even the author's heroic research cannot supply. In instance: the agricultural crisis of the nineteenth century's last quarter was not only a failure, but it was also peasants turning for the most numerous in the North, East, and wine-growing regions, where Wilson identifies a fairly high degree of anti-semitism, but much less in the country folk who bought their grain and wine (journeymen, rural artisans etc). In the same way, in small and larger towns, the economic depression affected *rentiers*, who drew their income from obligations with local interest rates, far less than those of their neighbours engaged in industry and trade. Were *rentiers*, rural artisans and such, less prominent in the anti-semitic ranks than those whose last times affected more directly?

Finally, the author seems to believe, like Sartre, that anti-semitism is just oriented towards political action than towards discharging accumulated frustrations, its tenants apparently sated by their apocalyptic fantasies and sadistic punishments. Yet, *fin-de-siècle* reflect less irresolution than impotence, and there are many people in the world today who would welcome the disappearance of their bigotries (say, the P.L.O. or Israel) in more or less painful circumstances. Who is to say that, given the opportunity, some of these people would not act on their wishes? In any case, if everything that was alleged against the Jews were true – and many took it to be true – repression, punishment, eventually extermination, seemed logical conclusions. As we have seen.

I wonder whether anti-semitism and its excesses call for so much explanation. Interesting sometimes, though more often disgusting, descriptions, nauseating and tedious research, anti-semitism is not, in Wilson's view, particularly hard to grasp. History suggests that there is nothing very extraordinary about anti-semitism rising to violence in periods of crisis (sometimes even without a crisis, just for fun); nor to this being confined to Jews, in Europe the resident alien par excellence, designated outsiders of religious tradition, reinforced by historically conditioned stereotypes, and often, by personal experience. The wonder is not that Dreyfus was unjustly condemned, but that he was unjustly sentenced led to scandal, and the major national debate, and to a resolution that we know.

Ground floor memories

Edward Nell

JOHN GORDON

James Joyce's Metamorphoses
214pp. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.
£14.
0 7171 1024 9

"Work in all you know. Make them accomplices". Stephen's or darkly plotted, subtext to his travesty of Shakespeare in *Ulysses* is surely a clue to Joycean procedures generally. Even the best of writers can get rather personal at times, but Joyce was these observations: the fact that the most spirited parts of John Gordon's book are on Stephen's egocentric use of Shakespeare and Joyce's artistic use of Shakespeare's *Ulysses*, real or ideal. Even his last chapter on *Pinneogone Wake* contends that though Joyce, as an indecent family man, is hanging some very heavy linguistic net-curtains, this is precisely because we are closer than ever to the gorge on in the Irishman's home. "Like Antaeus," Gordon says, "it keeps returning to the hard and solid ground floor of material, fascinate notesheets, and the like, is merely the heir to a line of thought, which pausing only to switch off the current of Joyce's irony, finds sermons in Bloom. Forgotten by Joyce's hard, sardonic spiritual father Flaubert, Gordon even goes so far as to add Trollope and Thackeray to the

Gordon's book, perhaps too metamorphic by half, has no real argument to offer. It very quickly settles down to being yet another section by section exegesis, from *Dubliners* to *Pinneogone Wake*, though principally concerned with *Ulysses*. Yet as such it is very far from being a primer, as his account of the narrator's vagaries and virtuosity in *Dubliners* alone would show. Its strength lies in its remembering Joyce's reminder to his friend Frank Budgen that the imagination is memory. Its weakness is that its regulative concepts are only mythical clichés – Antaeus, Proteus and Narcissus. These devices are used in the service of what would appear to be the ultimate general point, which is that the mind is in the world and the world is in the mind, and that Joyce is very good at dramatizing the fact. Proteus is reality, Narcissus is what mind all alone becomes; and Stephen as the nearest thing to a narcissist is partly condemned in consequence. Bloom is, we are solemnly told, "a far less limited man".

At this point it is necessary to remember that Gordon, perched on a mountain of commentary, archive material, fascinate notesheets, and the like, is merely the heir to a line of thought, which pausing only to switch off the current of Joyce's irony, finds sermons in Bloom. Forgotten by Joyce's hard, sardonic spiritual father Flaubert, Gordon even goes so far as to add Trollope and Thackeray to the

literary pedigree of *Ulysses*, to be convinced of which we shall require much more positive evidence.

What is attractive about Gordon's book is that he does keep the proceedings relatively light-hearted, with occasional insights like the idea that in the "Cyclops" episode "the cuckolded and shaken Bloom breaks down into his constituent extremes". But the commentary is often whimsical and peripheral. We are informed in the context of a discussion of "The Sisters" that Norman Podhoretz was deeply impressed by the undergraduate grades awarded him by Lionel Trilling. And I am puzzled by Gordon's ability to be grieved by Stephen's definition of God as "a noise in the street, soundly based as it is on the dictum that all history moves to one great goal".

Dr Gordon's *Ulysses* moves, in the manner of Goldberg, towards one great goal, the victory of the classical over the romantic, a good thing if one accepts T. S. Eliot's premises: that romanticism is the short cut to the strangeness of life without the reality. But there are short cuts to reality too, though Joyce criticism is not very alert to them, having become so lovingly hermeneutic and obstinately unsympathetic to use the faded, useful Althusserian term. One symptom of this is accepting without question that the imagination is an

The Brigadier's innings

Alan Ross

PETER TINNISWOOD

Collected Tales from a Long Room
262pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09150140 7

The Brigadier, Peter Tinniswood tells us, was born in Arlott St John's. "He loves fine claret, Vintio, quail in season, barrage balloons, blotting paper, E. W. Swanson and his sister Gloria." So far, so good. "I have had the honour," the Brigadier remarks by way of introduction, "in the name of freedom and natural justice to slaughter and maim men (and women) of countless creeds and races." The Brigadier is no Blimp, though, for he is quick to admit "it is my firm opinion that all the victims of this carnage and slaughter were just like you and I - upurt from their disgusting table manners and their revolting appearance. Poor chaps, they had only two failings - they were foreigners and they were on the wrong side."

You cannot say fairer than that. On such simple principles the Brigadier lived out his life and in the evening of it he makes Mr Tinniswood free of the details.

Most, but not all, of the main incidents are to do with cricket. The Brigadier, who has little liking for sex - particularly during Test Match Special - is a repository of arcane fact. For example, he knows all about the hitherto-concealed cricketing prowess of Queen Victoria, who had "the athletic grace of a Frank Woolley, the snow-white teeth of a Learie

Constantine, the combative pugnacity of a Freddie Trueman, the dark, hairy legs of a W. G. Grace." It was, according to the Brigadier, only by repeatedly making her pregnant that the Prince Consort could curb her cricketing proclivities. Even so she used often to open the batting incognito for Quidnuncs and the Free Foresters, and lie one on in the back parlour of The Bat and Ball. The Brigadier, however, discounts the rumour that she achieved reincarnation in the form of George Duckworth, preferring to believe that it was as Mr Bill Alley that she fulfilled her undoubted umpiring talents.

The Brigadier, in his roamings about the world, met many famous people; cricket writers, for example: "How the names trip off the tongue: Neville Cardew, R. C. Robertson-Hare, Bruce Woodcock of *The Times*, who achieved

greater fame early in his career as a pugilist of distinction, and E. W. Swanson, father and brother respectively of that uniquely glamorous star of the moving cinematograph, Miss Gloria Arlott.

To anyone not at all faint with cricket, cricketers and hangers-on the Brigadier's reminiscences would, unfortunately, make as little sense as a pamphlet in Urdu on birth-control to a Trappist monk. For cricket is the context in which his richly-stocked mind wanders, cricketers are the hit-men who galvanize his whisky-and-sun-stunned consciousness.

Peter Tinniswood is an unobtrusive listener. In fact, he does not say a word from first page to last. But had he not something like to tell the Brigadier's long, sometimes over-long monologues would have been lost on the wind.

Revelling in strange sorrows

E. S. Turner

PETER HAINING (Editor)

Shades of Dracula: Bram Stoker's Uncollected Stories.
204pp. William Kimber. £6.50.
0 7183 0159 5

The Dracula industry, though now based in Romania, maintains worldwide cultural outposts, for he is mentioned in Peter Haining's acknowledgements: the Dracula Society of London, the Count Dracula Society of Los Angeles, the Bram

Stoker Society of Dublin and the Vampire Information Exchange of New York.

Could it have been the Vampire Information Exchange which interested Mr Haining in a neglected newspaper report he says before us as the probable catalyst to the vampiric fancies already in Stoker's mind, leading to the writing of *Dracula*? The cutting was found in Stoker's papers and is from the *New York World* early in 1896. Quoting "an ethnologist of repute", it tells at length how, in the late nineteenth century, superstitious Rhode Islanders became so convinced that consumption was passed on by the

undead rising from their graves and draining the blood of the living that they conducted "scores of exhumations" in order to burn the heads of their once-loved ones. Since *Dracula* appeared in 1897 this may well have been the immediate inspiration of a novel which Stoker himself is supposed to have jokingly attributed to a heavy supper of dressed crab. (The other theories about what inspired this horrific masterpiece are well canvassed in Daniel Farnson's *The Man Who Was Dracula*, published in 1975).

Stoker, who was manager to Sir Henry Irving, wrote much horror fiction, most of it now forgotten. His widow published a volume of his short stories, but other projected collections did not appear. Now Haining, an indefatigable anthologist of tales of the macabre, has rounded up a curious assortment of Stoker's stories, all of which, he claims, "relate in some way or other" to *Dracula*.

In his early tales, if these are representative, Stoker gave signs of a morbid, over-heated sensibility, in which he rolled like a dog in carrion. In *The Crystal Cup* we have "Three, Oh Aurora, I will wait in the land of flowers, where thou and I will wander, never more to part, never more Ah, never more! Farewell, Aurora - Aurora - Aurora!" "The Castle of the King" features a distraught poet, in search of his lost love, traversing the Valley of the Shadow, fending off serpents and mandrakes, and eventually rejoining his beloved in the castle of the King of Death. Another tale of the Valley of the Shadow, published in 1907, is filled with visions of delirium and perhaps, says Haining, reflected the feelings of a then very sick man. Any links between *Dracula* and these Bunyanesque fancies and revellings in strange sorrows are hard to discern. The tales may even disappoint those who are eager to

That would have been a pity, for the Brigadier is an inspired raconteur whose bluff exterior conceals an alarming amount of knowledge - whether first- or second-hand it is often hard to say. He has fingered, for example, Patrick Eagar's scarce *The Nude in County Cricket* and the almost unobtainable E. W. "Gloria" Swanson's *A Down and Out in Hove and Tunbridge Wells*. He knows the sayings of E. R. "Elizabeth Regina" Dexter by heart and can reveal who it was who might have carried a treasured fragment of "Monkey" Hornby's underpants in his tin trunk.

But the Brigadier is no gossip; rather, he is one whose flights of fancy and speculation rank him with Breton, Flinter, Fintar and Edgar Allan Poe. A closet surrealist, he proceeds, by association of images. His clay-back memory, rifling the talloys of the

past, plucking eerie tunes out of a summer air, can joust with Nabokov and Ionesco on equal terms. *Dracula* - rather than revolutionary empires - stirred such a powerful conflicting incident and emotional recipes and rigmorales.

Tinniswood takes the Brigadier version of events as gospel. As Gibson may well be the father of the black tennis-champion Althea Gibson, Denis Amiss the author of *Lord T. S. Eliot* the brother of the unknown umpire, D. H. Lawrence a writer of a cricketing epic *Sons and Givers*. If he thinks differently he now. It is the Brigadier's innings, all, and if he wants to put the Brigadier, Tony Lewis, and rabbit on about the Roll and Whitney Serolom, well, he should Tinniswood bite the hand that feeds him?

Stoker's strong suit was the use of unities and menace, as in "Chain of Destiny" (published as "A. Stoker Esq."), involving an ancient curse; but he depended heavily on props as splitting skies and dancing fancies. The best story in this volume "Walpurgis Night", which had been intended as a prelude to *Dracula*, was dropped at the publisher's request for reasons of length. It had been published before and stands a good vampire story in its own right.

The most frenkish item Haining turned up is a story, occupying a quarter of the book, which is *Stoker* but by an American writer who wrote as Ralph Milne Farley. It was published in *Weird Tales* and purports to be "based on an old tale late Bram Stoker", as confides Farley. It is a tale of endearing silliness which reads as if Stephen Leacock decided to introduce a vampire element into one of his "Sketches of a Little Town", and ruscally banker who holds ever mortgage reduced to digging up an undead fiend to cut off her head.

stuffed her mouth with onions. Appalling of this intention, the hero jumps into the New York Public Library and, opening time, and making for the medical shelves, plunges into a work on cataplectic fringes.

If, as some say, Stoker had intended a sequel to *Dracula*, set in America, can this be the sort of thing he had in mind? Mildly. Mr Haining observes that there are elements of this story which Stoker might have found unacceptable: a fatal tendency to levity, for example. The prince has been joking too. Page 177 has a note which it would be a pity to correct: "The few red steaks began to show in the eastern sky."

encompassing relatively unworldly "wanderers" and "runners", and eccentric "milk-drinkers", and positively odd self-castorers, *Dracula* in the 1970s by one Selivanov with aim of establishing the rule of castrated throughout the world.

Swan Song is an investigative Coupled to the search for Lyuba Vanya's more personal quest for fulfillment. On a third, though not necessarily deeper, level the novel encompasses a wide-ranging exploration of the Russian people. Although Binyon's knowledge of Russian life and culture is powerful illuminates the book, more, difficult to estimate his contribution his expertise as a reviewer of crime novels makes his own first thriller, if nothing else, a bravely switched. The author is one point that bringing the novel to the critic face to face is a situation he avoided except on paper. The course, precisely what he has done and he takes the opportunity to do in some quiet self-study of the

An eye on the truth

Naomi Mitchison

STORM JAMESON

Company Parade
345pp.
Women Against Men
293pp.
Virago. £3.50 each.

In Storm Jameson's *Journey from the North*, one of the best ever autobiographies, written in the 1960s, there are several chapters about her early life in London, trying to write a successful novel, worrying about her husband's infidelities and fending off the attentions of a GI toughie. After reading that, it is clear that Storm Russell, the protagonist of *Company Parade*, is none other than the young Storm. And yet, not quite. For the girl in this violent, bitter, sharply written novel is only reacting against one war, whereas the writer of the autobiography, a generation later, has been through another war and the horror of her beloved Europe almost overwhelmed by Nazi and fascist ideas and actions, and has also been deeply hurt and disappointed by Stalin's Russia.

In this novel Hervey stresses the break between pre-1914 and post-1918 England, but perhaps there was an even bigger break to come between the 1930s and 50s - or now. Hervey was meant to be the main character of a series. All the other people, some of whom appear in brilliant sketches and some of whom die but will be remembered, were to be developed later on. In fact, she only wrote two more novels in this series: by the mid-1930s her eyes were on Hitler and the German nation.

In *Company Parade* we are reminded of the Treaty of Versailles,

of the almost incredible speeches of the politicians on the winning side, and of the popular newspapers headlining the "winning Huns" while at least some of the British soldiers in the army of occupation were trying to share their rations with starving children. Yet we must also remember that *The Times*, in those days our dear old Thunderer, had the courage to print Siegfried Sassoon's anti-war poem. That war had not hit the civilian population unless of course they had sons, lovers, fathers, dying in the trench warfare, the realities of which were always hidden. For the rest, business as usual was the motto - and how horribly successful some of the businessmen, and their women, were. The other motto was Homes for Heroes, also debunked in this book. For Hervey turns a raging, piercing eye on it all. Or rather, Storm Jameson does.

What kind of writer was she? My feeling is that she was short on imagination; but she had - almost certainly still has - an amazing eye for truth and a capacity for writing it down. This is north-country English and something that is far more necessary in difficult times than all the imagination in the world. Natural Hervey's home town, Dunstable, which in the real world is the Whitty of sixty years ago, comes through as clearly as though one lived there.

But why did Storm Jameson write novels, which demand a certain amount of imagination? First, because it was the obvious way to earn the money which she needed, mostly for her baby son, towards whom she felt a kind of guilt - her alter ego in this novel makes that very plain. But also because she wanted to draw public attention to specific wrongs and injustices and felt, perhaps correctly, that she could do it through a novel, but not through political journalism or public speaking. Fiction has been open to women for some time, but for handling factual

material men are supposed to be more acceptable. Writing novels, unless they are very long and apparently based on monumental research, is still rather down-market. Yet anyone looking for a factual picture of England immediately after the First World War could not do better than this book, even if it is a novel.

The three long-short stories in *Women Against Men* give us yet another look into a now non-existent English world, mainly that of London. But there is nobody in them who comes through as sharply as Hervey Russell. The "I" of the first story starts, Hervey-like, as a clever girl-child with a dominant, angry mother, she also writes an unsuccessful first novel. But her opposite number, the successful intellectual lady who turns out to have entirely misunderstood her own daughter, is not nearly as plausible as Evelyn in *Company Parade*. Again, there is a kind of caricature of Arnold Bennett as he might have been, though in fact wasn't.

The second story is more complex, and the people in it are more interesting. This is because at bottom it is about class and cross-class relationships. This has always fascinated British readers, and does so now even more than in the 1930s when the edges were only too clear. The third story of this collection is the best and the most memorable. It tells of a day in the life and hard times of an unnamed but exhaustively described woman who has been around with men and lived off them all her life. She isn't at all nice and what she does is deeply shocking, but we find ourselves compelled to share her anxieties and greeds and her memories of the men who have turned her into what she is. But I'm not sure why this collection is called *Women Against Men*. These women might just as well have been against class or against customary morals, or even against themselves.

Paperback fiction in brief

Patricia Craig

ANNA KATHARINE GREEN
The Leavenworth Case
311pp. Constable. £7.75.

The Leavenworth Case is one of the more celebrated curiosities of detective fiction; its early date (1878) makes it the first detective novel by a woman to be published in book form. Moreover, it presents, albeit in a rudimentary way, a number of the features later associated with such novels: painstaking investigation of evidence; a faint line of emphasis on clues ("I see a faint line of emphasis on the chambers"); an apparently undistinguished hero (the New York Inspector Gryce). A little ponderous, and often unintentionally funny, it is nevertheless a good early example of the genre.

GEORGE MACDONALD

Phantasies
167pp. Bookmarks. £4.95.

George MacDonald's "fairly tale for adults", first published in 1858, makes a romantic allegory (though its images and implications are not strictly allegorical, as MacDonald pointed out) of the process of growing up. Significant encounters, trials of moral strength and many fantastic dangers await the hero whose bedroom, on the morning after his twenty-first birthday, turns into a woodland glade. This novel, which points forward to C. S. Lewis's "Narnia" books, suffers somewhat from Victorian prolixity and idealism.

WILLA CATHER

My Mortal Enemy
122pp. Virago. £2.50.

In this short novel, first published in 1924, Willa Cather empties her narrative of everything not essentially relevant to the story; an exercise in a spare economy of content. The "story" is a romantic one; about an elopement and subsequent disinclination - is it some quiet self-study of the

first person by a young girl who meets the central character only twice, but finds her own understanding and perception enlarged by the encounters.

E. ARNOT ROBERTSON

Ordinary Families
331pp. Virago. £3.50.

"Ordinary people are peculiar too", Louis MacNeice wrote; this, as far as one can gather, is the underlying theme of E. Arnot Robertson's fourth novel (originally published in 1933). Unlike certain present-day writers, however, she doesn't pick and choose with cunning among the instances of ordinariness available to her; everything, as far as she can manage it, goes in - boating, bird-watching, village life, class distinctions, domestic tensions, moments of mortification. It's easy to spot the qualities that got E. Arnot Robertson condemned as a middlebrow novelist when her books first appeared - wordiness, deep feeling, apparent frankness, smoothness of tone. At her best, she is a graceful and accurate observer of everyday felicities and tribulations; there is something dispiriting about this novel, though.

REBECCA WEST

The Return of the Soldier
111pp. Fontana. £1.25.

In Rebecca West's first novel, originally published in 1918, a shell-shocked officer is sent home from the Front with all memory of his wife obliterated. The psychological implications of this particular affliction are plain enough; and so, it is gradually revealed, is the course of action necessary to effect a cure. Rebecca West handles her rather ornate theme with composure and a measure of irony. *The Return of the Soldier* is also more lucid and economical than her later fiction.

WILLIAM BOYD

On the Yankee Station
188pp. Penguin. £1.50.

William Boyd's stories attract all the usual terms of praise: crisp, wry,

energetic, effortless and so on. Many of them are impersonations, and the author slips with ease from one narrative manner to another, reproducing the exact tones of a girl in a schoolroom or an articulate psychopath. He is best, perhaps, on the erotic preoccupations of adolescence, overcharged and underplayed; but nothing in this accomplished collection is less than diverting.

CAROLINE BLACKWOOD

The Fate of Mary Rose
206pp. Penguin. £1.50.

The effect of one child's murder on the parents of another child is the theme of this unsettling, sardonic novel, in which morbid imaginings proliferate. The voice of the narrator, distant, detached and unsympathetic as the novel begins, gradually acquires a note of outrage as the elements of muddle and nastiness in his life become ungovernable. Sharp, striking and often grimly humorous, *The Fate of Mary Rose* is Caroline Blackwood's most substantial work to date.

VERITY BARGATE

Tk for Tk
157pp. Fontana. £1.50.

Verity Bargate, who died last year, is the author of three jarring novels. With hindsight, it's easy to identify the impulse behind this writer's raw-edge fiction: rage, rage against female misery, bodily affliction and blight. *Tk for Tk*, the last of the group, is based on a grisly conflation of three proverbs: "getting your own back", "cutting off your nose to spite your face" and "mocking's catching". The emotional effect is powerful and liberating, but it is achieved at the expense of subtlety and virtuosity.

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LONDON

THE HOSPITAL LIBRARY

Applications are invited from suitably qualified candidates for the post of Assistant Librarian (Serials) in the Hospital Library. The post is in the Hospital Library, which is a full-time position. The successful candidate will be expected to help run the library, including the serials section, and to be responsible for the collection of books and journals. The salary is £5,084 per annum. Four years' experience is required. Applications should be sent to the Librarian, The Hospital Library, London, by 10.00 a.m. on 15th November 1982.

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Hot stuff, old fruit

Michael Trend

MAX HENNESSY

The Bright Blue Sky
240pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
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It is 1914, and Nicholas Dicken Quinney is off to watch the cricket at Brighton. He misses the train; that afternoon he discovers instead the joys of flying and of the opposite sex. But we are only on page 14 - a cloud drifts across the clear blue sky of Old England, the shots at Sarajevo re-echo round the world and the story lifts off. Dicken's King and Country need him, and via the Royal Garrison Artillery he lands up in the Royal Flying Corps first as an observer and then as a pilot.